THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

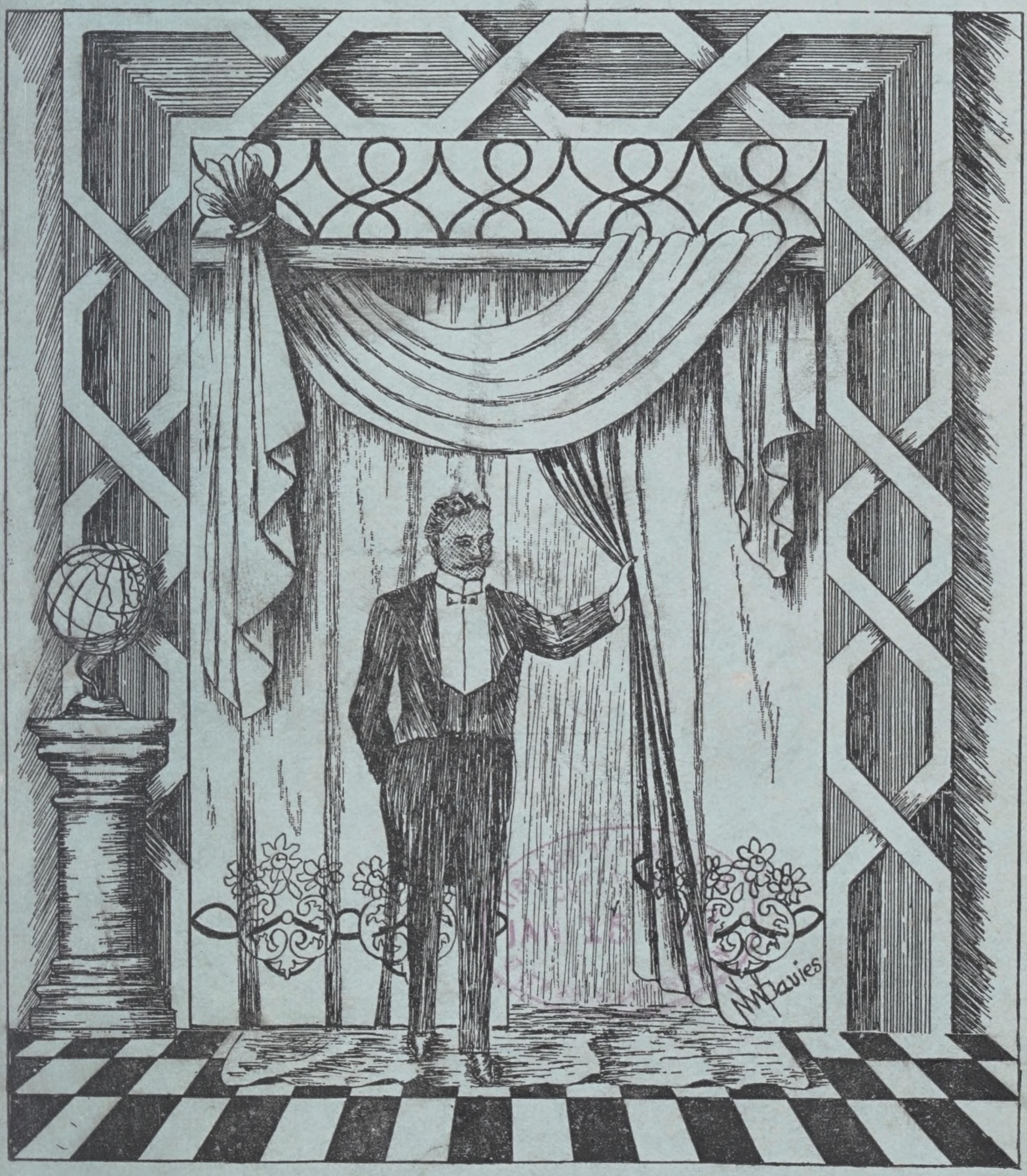
PRICE, 50 CENTS.

283
L. C.

What Would the World Think?

By OCTAVIA CLOUSTON,

Author of "A TITLE—REJECTED."



THE DODWORTH PUBLISHING HOUSE,

108-110 East 125th Street,

NEW YORK.

WHAT
WOULD THE WORLD THINK?

A Novel.

BY

OCTAVIA CLOUSTON,

AUTHOR OF "A TITLE—REJECTED."

35

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
COPYRIGHT.
JAN 15 1897
CITY OF WASHINGTON

5100-C~1

THE DODWORTH PUBLISHING HOUSE,
108–110 EAST 125TH STREET,
NEW YORK.

1897

PZ3
.C6256W

Copyright, 1897, by
OCTAVIA CLOUSTON.
[*All rights reserved.*]

DEDICATED

WITH KINDEST REMEMBRANCES

TO

MY ARTIST FRIEND

NELLIE WINIFRED DAVIES.

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

THE kindly reception accorded my first book, "A Title—Rejected," by reviewers and readers, and the numerous inquiries which have reached me regarding the publication of another book, have encouraged me to offer a sketch in this volume which, I think, is as likely to appeal to the general reader by reason of its realistic touches of nature, as my first book found a response in the minds of those who do not approve of the weakness of our wealthy women for titles of European nobility.

The heroine of this story is taken in part from life, and is to-day a young matron moving in an exclusive social circle, little knowing of the slumbering volcano at her feet, or suspecting what the verdict of her admiring friends would be if the world only knew.

CHAPTER I

WOULD THE WORLD THINK WRONG?

WHAT WOULD THE WORLD THINK?

CHAPTER I.

IT was growing quite dark; the curtains were closely drawn to exclude the night. A lamp with a pink silken shade cast its soft light throughout the room, showing to advantage the numerous traces of refinement and a quiet display of elegance; while the blazing logs on the hearth gave forth a cheerful glow.

A handsome, though faded woman of thirty was lying in bed weak and ill; her child, a girl of nine, sat on an ottoman near the fire, her little head resting on her hands, while tears from her big dark eyes rolled slowly down her cheeks. But they were quiet tears, for she was struggling bravely to keep from sobbing aloud lest she disturb her mother; but the tears she could not suppress.

The mother turned restlessly on her pillow with an occasional moan, but she was suffering more from fatigue and exhaustion than from actual pain. Since early in the afternoon she had been propped up in bed busily writing, and as the pages fell from her hands the

hectic glow in her cheek deepened, in her eagerness to finish before her strength was gone. While writing her eyes often wandered with an anxious and pathetic expression to the child, whose sad little face showed how fully she realized her mother's serious condition. As the darkness began to gather, the pages were carefully separated and placed in envelopes, then she laid them under her pillow with a bitter sigh.

"They're done," she murmured, "both done. Helena's future is now in other hands; I can do no more."

For a time she lay with closed eyes, thinking of the desperate step she had taken and of what she hoped might be the result. Then she became feverish, and restless with anxiety.

"Helena," she said at last.

"Yes, mamma," replied the child, advancing to the bedside. But directly she spoke her broken voice betrayed her grief.

"My darling, you are crying again," said the mother feebly. "I wish you would not grieve so much—it makes it all the harder for me."

The child threw herself beside her mother, and passionately kissed the pale lips. "O mamma," she sobbed; "how I love you! how dearly, dearly I love you!"

"I know you do, darling; and it's very hard for me to leave you. But you are a very sensible little girl, and will get along. But Helena, don't ever forget me; think of me every day, then you will remember me and know me, when we meet again in the world beyond. And if anyone ever says anything against me, do not believe what they say, do not listen to them, for there are people here who would tell you that which is false."

The child's only answer was to bury her face in the

bedclothes and give full vent to her pent up grief. The mother's heart was filled with anguish ; her burden seemed greater than she could bear. It was greater—it was cutting short her life.

"O God!" she cried, "I have sinned, and I am punished. But strengthen my child to resist temptation, and do not let my weakness be a legacy to her."

"Mamma," the child suddenly asked, "what sin have you ever committed?"

A spasm of pain settled on the woman's face, as she evasively replied: "We are all sinners, my child; and I——."

"But mamma, why are we all sinners?'

"Because we are born so."

"Then, mamma, if you were born a sinner, you are not to blame—you couldn't help that."

The mother smiled wearily.

"Mamma," the child continued, "who says we are all sinners?"

"The Bible, dear ; and you know the Bible is God's Word."

"Did anybody see God come down from heaven and write it?"

"No, dear; but God inspired men to write it for Him."

"Am I a sinner, too?"

"Yes, darling."

"How have I sinned? Have I ever been naughty? or told falsehoods or disobeyed you?"

"No, dear. You have always been a good little girl."

"Then, mamma," the child replied with an air of triumph, "those men that wrote the Bible didn't get inspired quite right, for I wasn't born when they wrote it, and you know more about me than they did. And

—I believe they're wrong about you too, mamma, for I don't believe you're a sinner."

Too weary to argue the matter, and content to have her child's unbounded confidence, the sick woman turned away, and ere long was quietly sleeping. The child slid from the bed and crept back to her seat by the fire. Presently there came a low knock on the door. She softly opened it, and William Olney Marvin entered.

He was a handsome bright-looking boy of twelve and known throughout the neighborhood as "Billy." On seeing Helena's tear-stained face his own immediately became serious, and in a low tone he inquired how her mother was. She glanced anxiously toward the bed; then motioning him to follow, led the way into an adjoining room.

"Mamma is sleeping," she explained, "and I was afraid we'd waken her."

"Is she any worse?" he asked quickly.

"Yes; she grows worse every day; and oh! Billy, I'm afraid she will die and leave me all alone."

"Don't cry, Helena," he returned soothingly. "Only try to believe that she'll soon be well again. See here," he continued, trying to divert her mind, "mother sent these to you with her love."

He set a willow basket on the table and removed the contents—a jar of beef tea, a glass of jelly, a plate of cold fowl and a dozen fresh-laid eggs.

"How good your mother is, Billy, and how good you are!" the child exclaimed, gratefully. "You are always bringing us something. I don't know what we'd do, only for your mother and you. Nobody else seems to care; they don't even come to see us at all—

nobody but the minister and the doctor, and now even the minister don't come any more because he's gone away."

"It's a shame!" exclaimed the boy, with angry emphasis. "A downright shame that nobody comes—mother says so, too."

"Why don't they come to see us? Why does everybody stay away so?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," said the boy, thoughtfully. "But I guess it's because they think your mother is proud and feels above them. I heard Mrs. Gosper say once that your mother was awful stuck up, and put on lots of airs, just because she used to live in the city and wore good clothes. But between you and me, Helena, I think the women-folks around here, are jealous because—well, because your mother's different from them. Somehow, she's more ladylike, and talks differently, and seems different every way. They're jealous of mother, too—that is, some of them are—for the other day Tom Marshall told me that my mother wasn't any better than his, even if we did live in a big house and kept servant girls to do the work. And Ned Perkins said that his mother said my mother was lazy, else she'd do the work herself instead of paying girls to do it for her. Then Ned said something about 'codfish aristocracy,' whatever he meant by that. I guess he didn't know himself—he must have heard it from his folks."

"Billy, why didn't you come over last night?" Helena asked. "I watched for you till most nine o'clock."

"I wanted to come," he replied, "but couldn't. You know I come most every night, and always on

Saturday afternoons and Sundays. But it was examination in school to-day. So I had to study late last night, and then father wouldn't let me out. See," he continued eagerly, his fine face flushing with pride, "here's a silver medal I've won. It's the prize for being the best scholar in school."

"O Billy, I'm so glad! What a smart boy you are; and you're handsomer too, and better than any of the other boys."

"You don't know any of the other boys," he replied, his blue eyes gleaming with pleasure because of her praise. "Helena," he continued earnestly, "I wish you could go to school too."

"I can't go—I cannot leave mamma," she replied sadly, "because I take all the care of her and do most all the work, except when Miss Nancy comes and washes and irons and bakes."

"You're a very wonderful little girl," he said, admiringly. "Mother says so, too! You ought to have a prize, Helena. You deserve it more than I do. But you didn't go to school when your mother was well—how is that?"

"I know I didn't. Mamma didn't want me to go. But, Billy, you needn't think I don't know anything, for I do—I know lots. Mamma has taught me to read, and spell, and write. And I know geography and can cipher. I'm way over in fractions; and I guess I know as much as anybody that goes to school except you."

"It's not to learn more," said the boy, "that I want you to go to school. It's to show 'em that you're not afraid to go."

"Afraid?" repeated the child. "Afraid of what?"

"Well," continued Billy, hesitatingly, "I don't know just how to put it, but Ned Perkins says that his mother said the reason you didn't go to school or anywhere else, was because your mother was afraid if you went out, you'd hear something that she didn't want you to know, and that's why she always keeps you at home."

Helena's eyes opened wide with wonder. "What could I hear?" she asked.

"O I don't know. But never mind what Mrs. Perkins says, or what she means either," said Billy reassuringly. "Everybody knows she's an old gossip, and a wind-bag; and I guess I'm about as bad, or I wouldn't have repeated it."

At that moment a hacking cough reached them. "Mamma's awake now," said Helena, turning to re-enter the room. But Billy held her back.

"Don't say anything to your mother," he whispered, "about what Mrs. Perkins said, or Mrs. Gosper either, or any of them. It's not worth minding; besides, she's sick, you know, and it might fret her."

On entering the room he stepped to the bedside. "Mrs. Channing, I hope I have not disturbed you," he said.

"O no, not in the least," was the faint reply. Her voice startled him. He detected a great change in her, and realized, boy though he was, that she was rapidly fading, and passing away.

"Billy, how is your mother?" she asked, presently.

"She's much better now, thank you; she's been up and around all day."

"Do you think she is able to come over for a little while? I do so much wish to see her."

"O yes, I'm sure she'll come. I'll go home and bring her right away." And the next moment the boy was gone. Ere long he returned with his mother, a gentle, sweet-faced woman, whom he closely resembled.

"Helena, dear," said Mrs. Channing, "you and Billy go into the other room for a few minutes and play. I wish to have a quiet talk with Mrs. Marvin."

"I'm so glad you were able to come," she continued, grasping her friend's hand when they were alone. "How I have missed you since you were ill. It's been very lonely for Helena and me all alone, day after day, and week after week. But it will not last much longer—I am sinking fast."

Mrs. Marvin began mildly to protest. "Don't deceive yourself, nor try to deceive me," returned the sick woman with a cheerless smile. "Look at me and see for yourself."

She raised up in bed, where the light fell full on her face. Mrs. Marvin started in alarm; she could utter no word of hope—death had too plainly stamped its victim.

Mrs. Channing sank back on her pillow, weak and trembling. But a burden was on her mind; it must be disposed of before she could rest. The thought stimulated and nerved her to action.

"I sent for you to-night," she resumed with feverish eagerness, "because I dared delay no longer. My disease is treacherous; the coughing spells come when least expected, and I fear every one will be the end. You are my only friend and adviser, Mrs. Marvin, and—I am so troubled about Helena, I felt that

I must consult with you concerning her, and see if——"

"My dear friend," interrupted Mrs. Marvin, "ease your mind at once so far as Helena is concerned. You know how fond I am of the child; and my friendship for you, aside from my fondness for her, would prompt me to look after her if she were left alone."

A look of intense relief came to the dying woman's eyes. "Will you take her with you into your own home, and care for her there?"

"Yes. I will take her, and try to be a good mother to her, for her sake, and for yours," was the earnest reply.

"If you will only keep her until she is fifteen years old, I shall be satisfied," said Mrs. Channing, "for I have, I trust, made provision for her after that."

Mrs. Marvin looked at her wonderingly, but a violent coughing spell seized the sick woman which prevented any further explanation.

CHAPTER II.

AFTER Mrs. Marvin and Billy returned home, Mrs. Channing called her child to the bedside. "Helena, darling," she said; "go upstairs and open that black chest in the back room; and in the bottom on the left hand side, you will find a wicker basket, which I want you to bring to me."

The child soon returned. The mother removed

from the basket an elegant jewel case. On the inside cover was a gold plate, bearing the inscription: "To Gertrude, from Sidney." Mrs. Channing took from the case a slender gold chain, to which was attached a little gold key. Then from under her pillow she withdrew the two letters which she had spent the afternoon in writing. Both were in sealed envelopes. One was addressed: "Helena Channing. To be opened on her fifteenth birthday." The other letter was much larger, containing several closely-written pages, and was addressed: "Mr. Sidney Bryan, No. — Wall Street, New York."

Mrs. Channing placed the letters in the jewel-case, but after meditating a moment removed them again. "Helena, dear," she said, "hand me my writing-desk and the lamp."

Then from the desk she took a stick of fancy sealing wax and a seal, on which her monogram was prettily interwoven. The letter addressed to Helena remained as it was, but the one to Mr. Sidney Bryan she sealed with a big strong seal, the monogram standing out in bold relief.

"There," she muttered; "no one can ever tamper with it now."

Again the letters were placed in the jewel-case, which was locked with the key. Then placing the key on the chain, she handed it to Helena, saying: "Put this around your neck, darling, and never remove it until your fifteenth birthday. Then unlock this jewel case and read the letter addressed to you. and carefully follow its directions. But under no circumstances are you to open the other letter, or to permit anyone else to do so. Promise me this, dear

The child faithfully promised.

"Now," continued the mother; "after I am gone, you are to live with Mrs. Marvin until you are fifteen years old, the letter will direct you after that."

Exhausted with over-exertion, the poor woman then fell asleep; but many times during the night she moved uneasily and murmured: "Dear Sidney." Suddenly she sat up in bed—a wild look in her eyes; and grasping the sleeping child, exclaimed:

"Promise me once again, Helena, that you will never read the *other* letter, and that you will love me always, and think kindly of me, no matter what they may say. And," she added, clutching her more firmly, "promise that you will not listen to them, for although I have done wrong, I have always been a good mother to you!"

The child lovingly promised to heed her in all she had asked. Then her heavy eyelids again drooped, and soon she was soundly sleeping. That promise was the last word spoken to her mother. When next she awakened, her mother lay beside her cold and still—her wearied body at rest; her troubled soul released.

Helena was an orphan; without a known relative in all the world; with no friends except Mrs. Marvin and Billy. As for the other residents of Clydesville, the little farming hamlet in which Mrs. Channing died, as is too often the case, they showed far more respect (?) to the dead, than they had to the living. A morbid curiosity prompted them to the cottage where the dead woman lay, whom for years they had shunned.

Nine years before the opening of this story Robert Channing—Helena's father—brought his young and beautiful wife to the cottage to live with his mother,

old Mrs. Channing. Robert was not popular in Clydesville. He had lived there during his boyhood, and was looked upon throughout the community as a regular scapegrace, and ne'er-do-well. The older residents shook their heads at the mere mention of his name, and prophesied for him no good. When old enough to shirk for himself, he gladly shook the dust of Clydesville from his feet and went to Philadelphia, where some relatives of his resided. There the opportunities for developing his evil tendencies were broader than in his country home, and ere long, with a certain set, he became "one of the boys." But as time passed he began to realize that the Quaker City was too tame for him. His relatives, too, were a serious obstacle to the enjoyment of his inclinations, and wishing to sow his "wild oats" without restraint, he suddenly left for the more congenial haunts of the great metropolis.

His mother, a good and pious woman, and one of the pillars of the Methodist Church in Clydesville, doted on her only son; nothing was too good for her "Robbie." She supplied him liberally with money, little suspecting the "real necessities" for his rather extravagant demands.

He was a handsome fellow—bad boys too often are; he dressed well; and, as his manner was pleasing, quite soon he found no difficulty in forming a circle of congenial acquaintances with whom he became very popular. Within a few months he was a familiar figure on Broadway where every afternoon from two until four (matinee days excepted) he could be seen promenading between Fourteenth and Thirty-third Streets. Later his walks were confined exclusively to

the "Rialto," and in the popular resorts of the "Tenderloin," he soon became well known.

At last, as his allowances were becoming less and less, and his mother was continually urging him to come home before he squandered her entire patrimony, he took to gambling, and made his headquarters at a well-known hotel in the vicinity of Broadway and Twenty-seventh Street, frequented by men about town, actors, and well-known sports. For a while fortune favored him; he won large sums of money, spent it freely, and among his own set was considered a "high roller."

Occasional reports of his conduct reached his good old mother, which caused her hair to grow whiter, and her heart more sad. Then came a time when his familiar haunts knew him no more; he had completely disappeared, and having no friends sufficiently interested to investigate his disappearance he was soon forgotten.

A year passed and he had not been heard from. His mother grieved and mourned in silence. But finally, when she had almost given up ever hearing from him again, she received a long letter dated in Chicago, stating that he was married to the sweetest girl in the world, and had settled down to a quiet life.

The news gladdened her heart, and she earnestly hoped that his wife's influence would be restraining and good. The only thing that troubled the dear old soul was that her "Robbie" had met his bride at the theatre instead of at church. But being very charitably disposed, she consoled herself in thinking:

"Maybe Gertrude is a well-meaning young woman

after all. City folks are different from us, and I've heard that some real good respectable people do go to the theatre—even the ministers sometimes; though I do think it must be those that have fallen from grace, and missed their calling."

But alas! After a very short time, Channing was not susceptible to Gertrude's influence, be it for good or for bad. He took to drinking, and again to the gaming table. But this time fortune ran in the opposite direction; he lost as easily as he had previously won. Ultimately, poverty began to stare them in the face. Then came the old, old story. First his watch was pawned; then his wife's. Then other articles of jewelry went the same way, and finally every available thing except her clothing, which she resolutely refused to part with. Matters went on from bad to worse, until they had been married two years; then, unable to face such reverses any longer he gave up, and came back to his mother's home in Clydesville, bringing his wife with him. Practically he was a broken down man, physically and morally.

Two months later Helena was born. How the child became possessed of so strong a constitution, so intellectual a mind, and such healthy morals is one of the mysteries which science perhaps can explain. When she was six months old her grandmother died. From that time Channing grew moody and morose. Life in that uneventful hamlet was irksome to him; he hated it and longed for new scenes, or rather for the old ones, but no longer had the means to venture into the life he craved. And in his discontent he did what selfish, unreasonable, mind-diseased men too often do—blamed his wife.

Finally a quarrel ensued, and in a fit of temper he left the cottage and went straight to the only public-house the place contained, and, under the influence of the poor whiskey which he consumed, his tongue became more glib than usual. The regular set of loungers were there, and eagerly listened to his surprising domestic tales, and drew him on; and in his half-idiotic condition, he dragged his wife's name into that foul bar-room, filled with smoke and the fumes of whiskey and beer, and with boastful bravado told how he had plotted and schemed to win her; and how successfully he had carried out his dastardly plot.

Until that night Gertrude Channing had had the respect and sympathy of the community. Her first arrival in the place, with several trunks of superior wearing apparel, had created quite a sensation. That fact, together with her pleasing manner, soon made her popular, and by the younger women of the village she was soon looked up to as a model in matters of personal appearance and dress.

But that night in the village bar-room, her husband —the father of her child—cast reflections which disgraced and ruined her name. But he never knew to what extent he had injured her, for in a few weeks' time he was taken suddenly ill with pneumonia and died. Then Mrs. Channing began to realize the hostile state of the minds in Clydesville toward her. She was shunned, and ostracized, as was Hawthorne's Hester Prynne, while Helena was looked upon as was Hester's little Pearl, the only distinction in Gertrude's favor being due to the age in which she lived. It was very galling to submit to such treatment and raise her child among such surroundings; but she was power-

less to go away. Fate had brought her there—she seemed destined to remain. She owned the cottage, a good garden, and had a meagre income left to her by old Mrs. Channing which she drew quarterly from the bank in Saxtontown, a thriving railroad terminus some four miles distant.

"I cannot get away," Gertrude sighed. "I cannot turn the house and lot into money. No one buys or sells around here. And where would I go? O God! where would I—where could I go? Here I can live on very little; the garden will supply all our vegetables, the interest on our money will buy other necessaries, and as for clothes, I have enough to make over for Helena and myself for years to come. But if I returned to the city, rent and living would soon reduce us to paupers."

Her only real friend in Clydesville was Mrs. Marvin —a woman who, although she did not live in a "glass house," did not believe in "casting stones." Others in the village, more conspicuous for their piety, were far less charitable, and feeling thankful they were not as some other people, took pains to show their goodness by shunning all semblance of evil. Years passed, and the neighbors still held themselves aloof, as though they feared that frail lone woman—whose life in Clydesville had ever been most exemplary—would corrupt their morals. Some people's morals are easily corrupted.

But when Mrs. Channing lay there dead, the neighbors flocked in; the white wan figure could not contaminate them now. She was buried in the churchyard beside her faithless husband; then Mrs. Marvin discovered to her grief and dismay that her promises

to the dead woman concerning Helena were of little avail. On mentioning to Mr. Marvin the arrangement made, he became very indignant, and positively forbade the child's coming to his house to live. Billy was in the room studying his lessons, but suddenly his book lay upside down on the table, and he became all attention.

"Henry," said Mrs. Marvin earnestly, "I promised poor Mrs. Channing only a few hours before she died, that Helena should come here to live, and——"

"I don't care what you promised," Mr. Marvin broke in. "It was done without consulting me. I am lord and master here, and she can't come. I never liked Robert Channing, and I think from all accounts his wife wasn't much better, and I won't have any of the breed here. That settles it!"

Mrs. Marvin was distressed beyond measure. She looked at him in silence, too disappointed to reply. But Billy rose and confronted his father. His fine face was flushed, his lips parted, and an angry gleam was in his eyes.

"Father," he exclaimed, "everybody says that we are the richest people in Clydesville, and I know we must be because we live in the biggest house, and we have lots more room than we need. So why can't Helena come? She's no other place to go, and just because you didn't like her father you surely wouldn't ——"

"William Olney! not another word from you to-night!" returned his father sternly. "Go to bed this instant, and if you fail in your lessons to-morrow, I shall punish you soundly."

When alone, Mrs. Marvin made one more appeal to

him, but it passed unheeded; and treating his wife with the characteristic tyranny of husbands who are indifferent to their wives' opinions, he rose and left the room. At the door he turned back.

"There's just one thing I'll do," he said, "and no more; and that is this: I'll engage an auctioneer, and see that the child is not cheated—that's my part. Yours is to look around and find her a home, for she shall not come here."

CHAPTER III.

In the morning Mrs. Marvin set about the task assigned her, which proved to be a rather difficult one. Nobody wanted Helena. Some had too many children of their own; others, like Mr. Marvin, were prejudiced against the child because of her parentage. Finally, she thought of Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Hoggins—they had no children, and possibly might take her.

Mrs. Hoggins, although not a cultivated woman, was, as a rule, good-natured, and Mrs. Marvin thought with her the child would be kindly treated until a more desirable home could be found. So to Mrs. Hoggins she went.

"Well, Mrs. Marvin," said the latter, when the object of the call was made known, "I'd be awful glad to be obligin', and so far as I'm concerned I'm perfectly willin' to take the girl; but," she added doubtfully, "there's Andrew, you know, an' I'll have to consult him, bein' he's my husband."

So Andrew was consulted. But Andrew objected.

"No," he said stoutly, "Bob Channin's brat can't come here, an' you needn't a thought it."

"But Andrew," pleaded his good-hearted wife, "they say she's a right handy little girl, an' she could help me wash the dishes, an' run erran's, an' ——"

"Do yer own dish washin', an' run yer own erran's; its better'n to be gaddin' about gossipin' 'th yer neighbors!" Then this male specimen of humanity—the old-time husband—turned on his heel and started for the door.

"But Andrew ——"

"Don't be a buttin' me," he retorted angrily, "for there ain't no 'buts' about it. You're wonderful interested in that gal jest because Hen Marvin's wife come to see about it. S'pose you'd like to take 'er jest to get into the good graces o' the Marvins. But jest you mark this, old woman: if Hen Marvin's wife hadn't a had a ax to grind, she'd never a called on ye; she's too all-fired big feelin'. An' if she's so concerned about the gal, why don't she take an' look after 'er 'erself, an' not be a troublin' other folks as has all they can do to look after theirselves?"

"I s'pose you mean to say then, that I can't take her; is that it?" asked Mrs. Hoggins, getting red in the face.

"Yes, 'Tildy, that's jest it; you've hit the nail squar' on the head, for that's my meanin' to a T."

"Andrew Hoggins," she exclaimed, "you're meaner than your name, an' goodness knows that's mean enough!"

"It ain't so mean but what you was glad enough to

take it for yerself, once upon a time," retorted Andrew in high glee.

"Well," replied his wife, "I didn't know the owner of it then like I do now, or I wouldn't a took it. No; I overlooked your ugly soundin' name, thinkin' there was enough redeemin' qualities in the man to make up. But there's where I got fooled; but I'll never get fooled the second time. No siree, one experience is enough for me."

"Quite a poet, ain't ye, Tildy?" he asked sneeringly.

"There's no knowin' but what I might a been one if I hadn't a gone an' got married to you. I wrote some beautiful poetry once when I was nothin' but a girl, an' read it before the hull spellin' school, an' everybody there clapped their hands an' cheered, an' they was jest bent an' determined on havin' me read somethin' else; but I hadn't nothin else wrote, an' so I read it all right over again, an' they laughed and clapped again, which showed it hadn't worn itself out in the first readin'. Why, even the school-master himself, said he was real sorry it was so late, for he'd like to hear it once more; an' he wanted to take it home with him, for he'd been kind o' nervous for a spell, an' hadn't slept good, an' he thought if he was to read it all through (there was twenty verses of it) jest before he went to bed, that he'd go off to sleep as peaceful as a lamb, they was so soothin' like. So I give him the verses, thinkin' it was kind o' policy to keep him good-natured; for he used to give the boys awful wallopins when he got mad; an' the girls too."

"A mighty fine school-master you had, I must say," returned Mr. Hoggins sarcastically. "Had to be dosed

with poetry before he could sleep, like he was a sick baby needin' a dose o' soothin' syrup."

"He knew enough to know good poetry when he seen it, if nothin' else," replied Mrs. Hoggins with a satisfied air. "But goodness knows," she continued, "I've got somethin' else to do now-a-days besides thinkin' up verses to write. My time's spent in washin' an' ironin' your clo'es, an' mendin' 'em; and cookin' yer food. I s'pose you think it's fun for me to stand over the hot stove all day a cookin' things for you to gobble up so fast that you can't hardly taste 'em as you shovels 'em into your mouth with your knife, 'cause your fork ain't big enough, an' so fast that you don't know whether you're eatin' sparrowgrass or puddin' or pie. An' then to think," she continued in a grieved tone, "that when you're too mean an' stingy to hire a girl to help me, that now when I've got a chance to have a little help without hirin', an' without pay, that you even refuse me that. Andrew *Hog*gins," she proceeded with rising anger, "I won't stand it! I'm jest goin' to git that girl, an' if you don't like it, you can lump it!"

"You are, are ye? Well I swow! Ye say it well! Why, 'Tildy, ye said that as easy as if it was gospel truth—ha ha ha!" And Mr. Andrew Hoggins leaned back against the door laughing boisterously, and in a most exasperating manner.

"It *is* gospel truth," returned Mrs. Hoggins firmly, "for I'm goin' to have 'er, an' you can't help yourself!"

Andrew's jovial mood suddenly changed; with an angry scowl and a sullen voice he exclaimed: "Now look a here, old woman; you're goin' it at too rapid a gait; you're a gettin outside o' yer traces, an' that

won't do! I've got somethin' to say about this matter an' my say is jest this: ye can't have 'er. D'ye hear?"

"I can!"

"You can't!"

"I shall!"

"You shan't!"

"I will!"

"You won't!"

"I will! I will! I will!"

"You will, hey, you will? when I say you won't? An' you only a woman, an' me a man, an' I yer husband? I'll be hornswoggled first!"

"Andrew Hoggins, you ought to be ashamed o' yerself, to use such vulgar swearin'," exclaimed his wife wrathfully. "You jest hadn't better go too far. It's you that wants to keep inside o' the traces, an' not me. I ain't no hand at twittin', ner flingin' up; but you want to remember that this house an' lot b'longs to me, an' did long before I give up my respectable name o' Sooter, for your disrespectable one o' Hoggins. Yes," she added in a scornful tone, "when you an' me got married, you didn't own nothin' but the shirt on yer back, an' that was the only b'iled one ye had, the rest was all blue an' brown checked."

"What about all my other clo'es?—my coat an' vest an' pants? Didn't I have none o' them, an' wasn't they o' no account?"

"Not much, I guess, considerin' you'd had 'em two years or more."

"How do you know how long I'd had 'em?"

She looked at him a moment in a way that caused him to shrink, as if he anticipated an unpleasant dis-

closure, then replied: "Do you want me to tell what you told me the night we went to Dave Wilkinses corn huskin' out in their new barn? How you says to me as we was drivin' through the woods on t'other side o' the creek, says you: 'Matildy,' (you hadn't got to callin' me 'Tildy,' in them days) but as I was a sayin', says you to me: 'Matildy, I reckon I'll be 'bout the sprucest dressed feller amongst the crowd to-night, for I jest went over to Saxtontown and bought this suit ready-made only yesterday; an' this is the first time I've wore it.' An' I remember more'n that you said, an' I wish now I hadn't a listened to it. After that you hung them clo'es up, an' there they hung till you took 'em down to git married in two years an' three months afterwards. An' that's how I know how long you'd had 'em."

"Mighty fine memory that one o' your'n; ain't it, *Ma*tildy?"

"Well, I've got pretty good reasons to remember that corn huskin' bee, an' so have you, Andrew Hoggins, an' for more reasons than the mere christenin' o' them bran new pants o' your'n."

Andrew began to get red in the face, and looked uneasily toward the door, but his wife mercilessly continued:

"I guess you remember well enough that when the huskin' was over we all went into the house to eat supper, an' you, thinkin' to play a smart game on the crowd, went into the pantry an' hid, where Becky, Wilkins had sot a whole row o' punkin pies she'd baked that day. One of 'em was left after supper was over, an' stood on a bench. Well, you got a glimpse o' the bench, but you didn't get a glimpse o' the pie,

an' you didn't know it was there till you planked yourself squar' down into it. I'll never forget, nor none o' the rest of 'em, either, I reckon, how you looked when you come a sneakin' out, all bedaubed with punkin pie. No wonder you made yourself scarce for awhile. An' when the dancin' begun, didn't you look comical with a pair of Abe Wilkinses pants on that was about a mile too short for ye, an' yer red socks a hangin' down over the tops o' yer shoes,"

Andrew, having no defense, started for the barn. He had heard enough; and if she had only let him go then and there, she would have won the day; but wishing to give him a parting shot, she followed him to the door, and called out:

"I want you to remember, Andrew, what I've said about this house bein' mine, an' about that little Channin' girl a comin' here, an' ——"

"The house ain't your'n!" he returned roughly. "What's your'n is mine, an' what's mine's me own. When a woman gits married to a man she ain't got nothin' more to say— he's boss!"

"It's only a mean, cowardly man that would talk like that, an' act as if his wife was nothin' but a chattel," returned Mrs. Hoggins, in a wavering voice.

"It ain't a question o' chattel," said Andrew angrily. "It's a question o' that gal a comin' here; an' now, 'Tildy, let me tell you once for all, if you want to bring 'er here, why, jest bring 'er right along, an' good luck to ye both. I've had my say, an' I'll say no more, but remember this: the day she comes, I go; an' I'll go for good, too."

Mrs. Hoggins, like thousands of women have done before, became an easy victim to that vain and cow-

ardly threat; she meekly succumbed, and permitted him to have his way. Not that he cared one iota whether Helena Channing came there or not, but being a selfish, obstinate creature he opposed his wife's wishes in the matter for the mere purpose of showing that he was the one to be suited, not she.

Andrew Hoggins is not the only man who has made that threat to accomplish his purpose; and many a weak-minded woman, both married and single, fearing to lose him forever, has given in, and realized her mistake when too late. A woman possessed of sufficient strength of character to say: "Very well, sir; if those are your principles, the sooner you go the better," would perhaps save herself many a regret in future.

When informed of Mrs. Hoggins' decision, Mrs. Marvin was in despair. But at last, on the day before the auction, Mrs. Timothy Hopdyke called in Helena's behalf. Mrs. Timothy (as she was commonly called) lived on a large farm some two miles distant, and was noted for being a "thrifty" woman.

"I've come," she said to Mrs. Marvin, "to see about takin' Bob Channin's girl. To be sure I don't need 'er, fur I've got one o' me own, an' laws knows one's 'nough. But we're a'goin' to have a big crop o' strawberries, and ras'berries, an' I was a thinkin' that most likely she an' my Marthy could do the pickin' of 'em, an' save hirin' help; and when the berry season's over, I'll find 'nough else fur 'er to do to pay 'er board."

Mrs. Marvin shrank from permitting the refined, sensitive child to be brought into daily contact with a woman of Mrs. Timothy Hopdyke's calibre; but it

seemed the only thing she could do. So it was arranged that Helena should go.

"It's only for a short time," Mrs. Marvin consoled herself with thinking. "She shall not stay there long. I will find some other place soon if I cannot persuade Henry to relent and let her come here."

The auction was appointed for two o'clock in the afternoon, but long before twelve, when the day arrived, several of the women of the village were at the cottage, curious and eager to pry about and see all that was to be seen.

"This won't bring nothin' at the auction worth speakin' about," said Mrs. Halpin, taking an engraving in an oak frame from the wall, "so I guess I'll take it home as a sort o' keepsake, an hang it in the front room."

"And this brass tea-kettle isn't of much account, either," said Mrs. Spencer; "so I might as well take it too."

Three other worthies were rumaging upstairs when they spied the black chest. Among other things they dragged forth an opera cloak and fan, a pair of pale blue satin slippers, a pair of twenty-two button white kid gloves, and several pairs of pink silk stockings.

"Well, did you ever!" exclaimed the finder, holding up the stockings in amazement. "Jest look at them now—silk stockin's, as sure as I live, and *pink* ones at that!"

"It proves what kind of a woman she was," said Mrs. Perkins. "An' to think of 'er a comin' here, an' holdin' up 'er head as high, an' higher even, than anybody else, an' all the respectable young women a imitatin' her style o' dress. Well, thank goodness, they

didn't get so far as to wear pink silk stockin's!" And Mrs. Perkins' manner expressed profound relief that the young ladies of Clydesville had not become so demoralized.

In the midst of their discoveries, a little head appeared above the stairs, and a very resolute little face looked upon them; then a shrill voice exclaimed:

"Those things were my mamma's, and they're to be kept for me! They're not to be sold and you mustn't touch them."

"More's the shame to your mamma," was the unfeeling answer. "I guess we won't hurt the trash. We're respectable women, we are; and we're satisfied to wear plain home-knit stockin's, and to carry palm leaf fans."

Before the child could reply, Mrs. Marvin appeared on the scene. She had overheard the last remarks, and her indignation was thoroughly aroused.

"Ladies," she exclaimed sternly, "I am amazed beyond expression, that you should speak in so cruel and heartless a manner in the presence of this poor child. Furthermore, there is no occasion for you to be up here. All things to be sold are down-stairs, where you are at liberty to examine them; but everything up here is for Helena when she is older."

"I s'pose you think we're here to snoop and are snoopin'," said Mrs. Perkins, the chief offender. "But I don't know, Mrs. Marvin, but what we've got as good a right up here as you have, and I guess we're as good as you be, too, if we don't make as many pretensions."

"It's not a question of goodness," returned Mrs. Marvin. "It's a question of right, and—of decency."

"Of decency, is it?" repeated Mrs. Gosper. "Well, if it comes to that, I guess we're as decent as her that had all these fine fixin's. But if you're so much more decent than us, why are you up here a snoopin', too?"

"I am here at Mrs. Channing's request to look after her child's interests."

"O yes, everybody knows that you and her was as thick as two peas in a pod," retorted Mrs. Perkins, sneeringly; "and they say 'birds of a feather flock together.'"

Having given what she considered a home thrust, she flounced down-stairs followed by her worthy companions.

When the auction was over, Mrs. Marvin took Helena home with her for the night. Then came the painful task of informing her that on the morrow she was to go and live with Mrs. Timothy Hopdyke.

Helena's grief was intense.

"Am I not to stay and live with you?" she sobbed. "Must I leave you and leave Billy? Oh, Mrs. Marvin! mamma said for sure that I was to live with you."

"I am very sorry, my child, that you cannot," replied Mrs. Marvin, gently. "It grieves me to have you go, and I knew you would be grieved, too; that is why I have waited until the last minute, as it were, before telling you."

"But why must I go? Why can't I stay here?"

"Because, for the present," was the hesitating reply, "Mr. Marvin thinks best that you should go to Mr. Hopdyke's."

The child had known intuitively for a long time that she was not a favorite with Mr. Marvin, and quickly comprehending the situation her pride arose, and

quickly resolving not to stay where she was not wanted, finally dried her tears. Towards dusk she stole out to take a farewell of her home. From there she went to the churchyard, where her grief burst forth afresh.

"O mamma!" she cried, "I'm so lonesome without you; and nobody wants me. O how I wish I could die too, and go where you are—I know I'd be wanted there,"

Throwing herself flat on the ground beside her mother's grave she wept violently, feeling very keenly her forlorn condition.

"Dear, dear mamma," she moaned, "how I hate to go away and leave you here alone in the cold ground. O mamma, please ask the Lord to let me come too. Tell him I'm not wanted here, and tell him how lonesome I am—please do, mamma."

Just then she heard a step near by, and rising quickly, beheld Billy Marvin. He had missed her, and suspecting where she was, had followed, and witnessed her pitiful grief.

"Helena, please do not feel so," he said; "and do not think nobody wants you, for there does. Mother wants you, and I want you, but father, he's—he's a—well, sometimes he gets cranky. I guess most men do, though I don't mean to when I'm a man."

"Billy, you don't know how dreadfully I feel," returned the child, sorrowfully. "I can't bear to think of leaving you and your mother, and our house, and mamma's grave, and going away over to Mr. Hopdyke's. I don't know them at all, and they live so far away that I don't know when I can ever come to see you again."

"I guess I feel as sorry about it as you do," re-

turned the boy. "But, Helena, try, as mother says, to be philosophical. Remember two miles isn't so very far after all; and I'll go to see you often, and so will mother—she said so."

Helena shook her head despondingly. To her the matter appeared very dark, indeed.

"I only wish I was your sister," she said in a pathetic voice. "Then your father would have to let me come, and we could be together always. Couldn't we?"

A thought occurred to the boy, causing a light to break over his face. "You can't be my sister," he said, "and I can't be your brother, but I'll tell you what you can be one of these days—you can be my wife. Can't you, Helena? And then we can always be together."

"I suppose I can," was the prompt reply; "for I'd rather be your wife, Billy, than anybody's. But," she continued, mournfully, "we're only children—we can't be a man and wife."

"We won't be children always," he returned, stoutly. "We'll soon be grown up. Why, I've gained five pounds this month, already."

"But we won't be old enough for ever and ever so many years yet."

"The years'll soon pass," he replied sagely.

"But before they do, you'll forget all about me," she answered with a little sigh. "There's lots of other girls besides me, and you'll go and get married to some of them."

"No I won't," he returned with strong emphasis. "I don't want to marry any other girl but you, and never will; and if you think I'll forget all about it we

won't wait until we are grown up—we'll get married now. Then we can't either of us forget, for we'll be bound to each other; and when we get big, we'll have to live together—the same as other married folks do."

"There isn't any minister—he's gone away for a month," said Helena regretfully.

"That don't make any difference," replied the boy, with growing eagerness. "I heard father read in a newspaper the other day that in the State of New York if a man and woman agree to be married, and he calls her his wife, and she don't object, that she is his wife. Besides that, when we are grown up, we can have a minister marry us over again, so to make sure it's all right. So, Helena, we'll just have the ceremony now.

Helena rather demurred. Her ideas were somewhat confused, and such a marriage was to her a thing unheard of. But like many others of her sex, she was at last persuaded.

"I suppose you know best, Billy," she admitted in a doubtful tone. "You're a lot older than I am, and if you say it's right, why—I believe you."

"Do you remember," he asked suddenly, "when Anna Willis was married in church to John Bolton, what she had to say, and what he had to say?"

"Yes."

"Well then, we can say the same as they did, and then we'll be married enough to last until we're grown up anyway."

They sat on the ground discussing their future until the moon appeared. "It's getting late," said Billy, rising. "Father'll soon be looking for us if we don't

hurry home, and as you're going away early in the morning, we hadn't better put it off any longer."

Helena rose—a serious expression on her fair young face. Lovingly they clasped each other's hands, and standing there in the weird moonlight beside her mother's grave, those children took their vows of everlasting faithfulness to each other. The scene was an impressive one; to them it was no child's play. They appeared to realize the importance of the step they were taking; and never were marriage vows—whether registered on earth or in heaven—more sincere, more sacred, than were theirs to them.

"Helena," said Billy earnestly, "wilt thou take me, William Olney, for your lawfully wedded husband, promising to love me always?"

"I will," promptly responded Helena.

"Now you must ask me the same," said Billy, acting as prompter.

"William Olney, wilt thou take me, Helena, for your lawfully wedded wife, promising to love and cherish me always?"

"I will," was Billy's emphatic reply.

Then bowing their heads, they repeated together: "And now may God bless this union. Amen."

Slipping a little gold ring from his finger the youthful bridegroom placed it on the finger of his bride. "Aunt Elizabeth gave this to me when I was a mite of a boy," he explained, "and it's got my name on it. It's most too small for me now, but you can wear it for a long time yet; and when it gets too small for you, then lay it away, and every time you look at it you must remember that you are my wife." Then he

gave her a good hearty kiss, saying: "That's the way John Bolton did to Anna Willis."

During their homeward walk Billy very earnestly remarked: "Now Helena, mother don't intend you to stop with Mrs. Hopdyke long, and there's no knowing where you'll go to when you leave there. But no matter where you go, you must not forget to come back to me, else let me know where you are, so I can go to you; and remember when you are twenty-one years old you'll be your own boss and can do as you please. So don't forget."

"Billy, I'll never forget you," was the solemn reply; "and I'll never, never forget that I am your wife. And when I am twenty-one years old, no matter where I am, I'll come back to you."

And thus they parted.

CHAPTER IV.

MR. TIMOTHY HOPDYKE was a good-natured farmer, but Mrs. Timothy was an avaricious hard-working woman, with a sharp eye and a still sharper tongue. When she decided to take Helena, Timothy did not interfere. He was often known to say: "I never meddle with 'Mandy. I've got all I ken do to run the farm, and 'Mandy, she's quite capable of runnin' the house—an' runnin' it to suit herself." He might very truthfully have added that she was quite capable of running him out of it sometimes in order to escape

her sharp tongue. But he didn't—he kept that to himself.

Helena found a decided and unpleasant change between her mother's pretty cottage, with its numerous traces of elegance, and that bustling farm house so devoid of them all, and a marked difference between her mother's refined ladylike voice, and Mrs. Timothy Hopdyke's loud harsh one ; and, child though she was, Mrs. Hopdyke's voice and uncultivated language grated unpleasantly on her ear. She soon learned that she had not been taken into the Hopdyke household from any philanthropic motive on the part of Mrs. Timothy, but from a desire for "cheap help."

When Mrs. Hopdyke heard that Mrs. Marvin was endeavoring to secure a home for Mrs. Channing's child, she lost no time in seeing about it.

"Timothy," said she, "I've jest heerd say that Bob Channin's gal can be had fur the mere askin', an' I'm goin' right over to the Marvinses to get 'er. It's as great a streak o' luck as I ever heerd tell. Here I've been a wishin', an' a prayin', an' most a losin' sleep, as to how we'd ever git all them strawberries and ras'-berries picked, 'thout spendin' a lot o' money fur help. An' now, jest in the nick o' time my prayers is all answered. Don't tell me no different," she continued, as Timothy was about to enter a protest, "fur I know what I'm a sayin' ; an' if you was a good church member like I be, most likely you'd have better luck 'n you do, an' mebbe your horses wouldn't 've run away yesterday, an' broke the plow p'int. I do wish, Timothy, you was a professor of religion."

"Wall, I don't want to profess to be what I ain't," returned Timothy. "Professin' a thing, an' really

bein' it, is two different matters. Some folks is great at professin', an' that's about all ken be said for 'em."

"Timothy Hopdyke, you orter be ashamed o' yourself to talk like that. It's castin' reflections on religion."

"It ain't nuthin' o' the kind;" retorted Timothy; "it's only casting reflections on them that professes religion an' ain't got it.

"But the Bible says: "'Judge not that ——'"

"Yes, 'Mandy, I know it does; an' in another place it says: 'Ye shall know 'em by their works.' Only I guess I've got the verse back end to."

"It's a wonder that you ken get it any way at all, such an unb'liever as you be! There's one thing certain, an' that is, you don't do no works to be judged by. You jest go to meetin' Sundays, 'cause everybody else goes, an' ——"

"Whose judgin' now, 'Mandy?"

"Well, it's true, Timothy, an' you know it; an' you only drive me over to Wednesday night prayer meetin's jest because it's too far fur me to walk. But what good does the goin' do you? Durin' the hull meetin' you jest sit there as dumb as a oyster. Now what kind of example is that fur the young converts, I'd like to know? Jest look at me, fur instance, I bears my cross every time 'thout shirkin' it. I prays, an' I testifies, an' sometimes leads the singin', 'specially when no one else makes a start; an' I lets my light shine, an' don't hide it under no bushel like you do, only you ain't got no light at all to hide 'cause your in sich darkness. That's what I call doin' good works—works that'll stand being judged by when the last great day comes."

"Well, 'Mandy, I ain't so concerned 'bout the comin' o' the 'last day' as you be. Seems to me there's other days to think of as well's the last one. As fur me bein' dumb, mebbe that's so; but I guess there's as good ways, if not better, of showin' one's 'works' than to git up in meetin' an' spout away fur half an hour, an' then come home an' fret and jaw, an' jaw an' fume, till somebody wishes they'd never been born, or else that they could turn up their toes over in the graveyard an' have peace, at least till the last day does come."

"I s'pose, Timothy Hopdyke, you mean all that fur me—me, yer hard-workin' wife, that drudges like a slave from mornin' till night, year in an' year out. Well, hereafter, please talk to me in plain speech, an' not in riddles, which I never was good at guessin'."

"You appear to guess that one pretty easy, 'Mandy. Seems to me the coat fits—you wear it so slick."

"Well," returned Mrs. Timothy, with a sigh, "I s'pose that's all I ken expect from a unb'liever. But I'll pray fur you, Timothy, an' pray 'thout ceasin', an' b'lievin' as I do in the answerin' o' prayer, there's hopes that you'll yet be brought to see the error o' your ways."

Mrs. Hopdyke rose from the table. "Now, Timothy," she said, "I want you to hurry up an' hitch old Sorrel to the covered buggy, fur I'm a' goin' right over to git that gal."

"What'll you do with her after the berries is all picked?" Timothy asked meekly.

"I s'pose you'd like to have me buy her a organ, or a pianner, with the money from the berry crop," said Mrs. Timothy, scornfully. "You jest trust me," she

added, "to find 'nough fur 'er to do. I want to send Marthy to school this comin' fall, an' the little Channin' gal ken take 'er place, an' help me so that Marthy ken be spared."

"What about the Channin' gal goin' to school too?" asked Timothy. "Don't she need some learnin' as well as Marthy?"

"Timothy Hopdyke, you're the aggravatinest man I ever seen," retorted Mrs. Timothy angrily. "The gal ought to be thankful fur a good home, a plenty to eat, an' a place to sleep."

"Yes," returned Timothy dryly, "an' fur the chance o' drudgin' about all day to earn it. Well, 'Mandy, mebbe that's part an' parcel o' your religion, but it ain't o' mine. The church folks pity you for bein' uneq'ally yoked to a sinner like me; but between you an' me an' the gate-post, I guess my religion is as good as yours is. Leastwise I ain't no hypocrite no how."

"Well, I ain't no time to argue the question o' your goodness, or your self-righteousness either," replied his wife, loftily, "fur while I'm here a arguin', somebody else might go an' git the gal, an' then I'd lose 'er, an' have to git other help to pick them berries an' pay fur it."

"I guess, 'Mandy," said Mr. Hopdyke meaningly, "that if you're to git the little gal in answer to prayer, there's no danger o' your losin' 'er—it's probably all fixed, unless" he added in an aside, "somebody else has been prayin' fur 'er too. An' then I 'spose the one gets 'er that's prayed the loudest."

Mrs. Hopdyke gave him a wrathful glance, and hurried away to change her dress of blue calico for a

clean checked gingham. Two hours later she returned home rejoicing in the thought of having secured such "handy help," as Helena was reported to be.

"An' so cheap, too!" she exclaimed to Timothy. "Nuthin' to pay out, an' no expense only what she eats; an' laws, a chit like her can't eat much; an' what she does 'll be mostly of our own raisin', an' that don't count—it ain't like spendin' hard earnt money."

Mrs. Hopdyke's daughter, Miss Martha, was a plump girl of eleven, who hated work, particularly dish-washing, and from the day of Helena's advent into the family she always managed to be out of sight and hearing at that time, and eventually the dish-washing all fell upon Helena. All day long, day after day, it was "Heleny, you do this," and "Heleny, you do that," until the child found life very irksome indeed.

One day, during their twelve o'clock dinner, when Helena had been there some four months, Mr. Hopdyke announced his intention of going to Saxtontown that afternoon to see about getting his mowing machine mended.

"Well, Timothy," said Mrs. Hopdyke, "I'll go along too. I need a new calico dress an' some new aprons, an' so does Marthy. Besides that, I want to take that jar o' butter over to the Widow Lacy, an' see if she don't want some more eggs. So I'll hurry up an' be ready, b'time you've got the horses hitched up."

"Me too, ma," said Martha. "I ain't been to town in an awful long spell, an' I want to go."

"All right then. You jest hurry up an' get fixed. Put on yer blue lawn dress, an' don't be long with yer primpin'."

Helena looked up longingly. "Please may I go too?" she asked.

"We can't all go to oncet," responded Mrs. Hopdyke. "The seat won't hold but three, an' Marthy she spoke first."

"Can't I ride in the back, on the bottom of the wagon?" Helena pleaded.

"No, ye can't do nuthin' of the sort," was the sharp reply. "The back 'll be all took up with the mowin' machine, an' you'd look fine h'isted up on top o' that."

Helena turned away with quivering lips.

"Come now, none o' yer snivelin'," said Mrs. Hopdyke. "You can't always 'spect to go; but if yer a good girl yer turn 'll come sometime. Now you be spry an' wash up them dishes, an' set the table fur supper, an' peel some pertatoes, an' put 'em in the pot, an' cover 'em over with water so's they won't turn black. Then peel that dish of apples, an' put 'em on to stew, an' put a cup full o' brown sugar in 'em. An' when they're done, shell them peas that's out in a pan in the wood-shed."

Mrs. Hopdyke left the room, but soon returned arrayed in a black lawn dress and black straw bonnet, conspicuous for its bows of bright green ribbon and bunches of red roses.

"Heleny," she said, "when you git the other things all done that I've named, you jest take the broom an' clean up a bit around the stove an' brush off the porch. An'—O yes! Don't forgit to watch the pigs, an' see that they don't get into the garden an' root up the cabbages; an' have an eye to the chickens that they don't scratch amongst the tomato vines."

At that moment Mr. Hopdyke came in from the

barn. "Marthy," said he, "I wish you'd go an' fetch my wallet. It's up stairs in my Sunday-go-to-meetin' coat."

"I don't know where'bouts yer coat is," said Martha in a pert tone. "Send Heleny fur it."

"Go yourself," replied Helena with spirit. "I have enough to do now and a good deal more."

Mr. Hopdyke gave the child a look of approval; then as was usually the case, went after the wallet himself.

When seated in the wagon Mrs. Hopdyke called back in a shrill voice: "Say, Heleny, don't forgit to shell them peas; an' when you've got everything else done you just take that knittin' work I sot up t'ther day, an' go out in the garden an' sit under the apple tree in the shade an' knit; an' mind you don't drop no stitches, 'cause dropped stitches makes loop-holes; an' while you're a knittin' jest keep your eyes on the pigs an' chickens. Then you won't git into no mischief."

The child looked defiant. "How can I keep my eyes on the pigs and chickens," she asked, "if I'm to keep them on the stitches and loop-holes?"

"Y'ain't to have no loop-holes," called out Mrs. Timothy in a loud harsh voice. "Them only comes by droppin' stitches, an' didn't I tell you not to drop 'em? So don't give me no more o' yer sass, miss, or I'll git out an' cuff yer ears."

A flush of anger overspread the child's face. "You couldn't cuff me," she returned defiantly, "for I wouldn't let you. My mamma never cuffed me, and you sha'n't."

"You brazen little minx! I'd get out an' cuff ye

now, if we wasn't in sich a hurry. As fur yer ma, I guess she done worser things than cuffin' ye would a been."

"She didn't!" returned Helena. "She never did anything wrong in her life; and she's an angel now, and that's a good deal more than you are."

Mr. Timothy Hopdyke suddenly spoke to the horses and drove away. There was a humorous twinkle in his eyes.

"That gal, she's got the right kind o' grit, anyway, an' I'm glad on't," he mused. "She'll need it while she lives with 'Mandy. She's a good child too, an' bright as a new dollar; but she's nagged at too much. 'Mandy, she's a great one at naggin'. Somehow her an' me can't agree on them p'ints at all. She seems to think bein' a church member covers a multitude o' sins (it hides 'em anyway); so she'll go to prayer-meetin', an' spout away fur half an hour, tellin' about the Lord's wonderful goodness to her, an' then she'll come home an' make that poor little motherless thing cry with 'er sharp tongue. Many times I've wished she'd let the 'wonderful goodness' she talks of so much soften 'er heart a bit, an' let it last 'er till the next prayer-meetin'. But there ain't no use in my sayin' anythin', or meddlin', fur I couldn't stop 'Mandy's tongue if I tried. But there's one thing sure: if 'Mandy ever goes to cuff 'er, or strike 'er, why then, I'll meddle, fur I won't stand that nohow."

Helena watched them until they drove around the curve, then bitter tears of grief and anger filled her big dark eyes. Did she return to the kitchen and do all that had been assigned her? No; she did not. She went instead into the meadow, and throwing herself

down in the tall grass among the buttercups and daisies, gave vent to her childish grief. Not that she wished to be disobedient; she fully intended to do all that she had been told to do, but she felt unfitted until she had relieved her overburdened heart. Soon her sobs ceased, her troubles were forgotten—she was sound asleep. Not until the sun was far in the west did she awaken, and hastening to the house found the kitchen fire out and the tea-kettle cold. The array of things undone bewildered her.

"I don't know where to begin," she cried in dismay. "There's so much to do." She began however with the peas, and had just got them shelled when the lowing of the cows warned her that it was nearly milking time and that Mrs. Hopdyke would soon return.

"O the pigs and the chickens!" she suddenly exclaimed in frightened tones. "I'd forgotten all about them." She ran to the garden, which happily was unharmed. Returning to the house, she heard the front gate open and saw a man approaching with a satchel in his hand.

"Little girl, is your mother home?" he asked.

"No, sir. There's no one home but me, and—I wish I wasn't."

He sat down on the door-step, removed his broad-brimmed hat, and began to fan himself. Noting the child's tear-stained face he kindly inquired the cause.

"They're not good to me," she said confidentially, finding a sympathizer in the stranger.

"Who is not good to you?"

"None of them, except Mr. Hopdyke. He's good to me only—he don't have much to say. Mrs. Hopdyke does all the talking, and she's the worst. She's

not my mother, either—I only live here. They've gone to town, but I'm kept home to do all the work."

To convince him of the truth of her assertion she itemized the numerous tasks required of her, while the stranger's eyes expressed both amusement and indignation. To divert her mind he took from his satchel a book of animals, brightly colored, with descriptions of their habits and native climes. Not only were the illustrations artistic, but the book was handsomely bound, and very attractive. When Helena saw the big elephant on one side, and the lion on the other, her eyes sparkled.

"Can you read?" the man asked.

"O yes, sir. Mamma taught me how to read and write and cipher, and lots of things."

"Your mamma was a very sensible woman," he remarked.

"Mrs. Hopdyke doesn't think so," said Helena. "She says my mamma was bad, because she never whipped me, and because she wore silk stockings. Do you see any harm in that?"

"No," was the smiling reply, "providing one can afford them. Little one," he said, suddenly changing the subject, "would you like to have this book for your own?"

"Yes, sir; very much, if I could, but I can't for I've no money."

"Well, if you will give me some bread and butter, and a glass of milk, you shall have it."

Helena ran in, and quickly returned with a plate of bread and butter, a whole pitcher of milk cold from the cellar, a liberal slice of ginger cake, and a piece of apple pie. Quite a treat it was for the weary book

agent, and he enjoyed it with keen relish. After a few kind words of sympathy he took leave, just as the Hopdykes came in sight around the curve.

Poor Helena. She had forgotten Mrs. Hopdyke's existence, so absorbed was her mind with the beautiful book. But a sight of her recalled the child from fairy-land, and with a look of dismay she glanced around the room from the unpared potatoes to the unstewed apples, and the unswept hearth. Very soon Mrs. Hopdyke's keen eyes were taking in the state of things, and her anger rose accordingly. She was tired and out of sorts, having only received fifteen and a half cents a pound for her butter, when she had fully expected twenty. And eggs only brought ten cents a dozen.

"I declare," she said to Timothy during the ride home, "it don't pay no longer to feed the hens, when eggs is down to that price. Hereafter I'll just let 'em scratch fur a livin' till eggs goes up again."

In that state of mind she encountered Helena, the unwashed dinner dishes, and the fireless stove.

"Heleny Channin'!" she exclaimed wrathfully. "You lazy little minx. You ain't done none o' them things I told ye to do. How did ye ever dare ——"

"I meant to—I—I—I tried," said Helena piteously, "but somehow I—couldn't."

"You meant to, an' you tried, an' somehow you couldn't," repeated Mrs. Hopdyde with intense scorn. "Well, I'll see about that, but mebbe you can tell me who that man was agoin' out o' here jest as we got in sight; an' what was that you was a hidin' under the table cloth when I came in? Bring it to me at oncet."

Helena nervously obeyed.

"What's this?" asked Mrs. Timothy, snatching the book from Helena's hand. "An' how came you by it?"

"O let me see it!" exclaimed Martha, snatching it in turn from her mother.

"Answer my question," said Mrs. Hopdyke angrily to Helena.

"The man gave it to me because I gave him something to eat."

"You did!" returned the woman sneeringly. "You gave him something to eat—*you!* An' where did you have anything to give?"

"I got it out of the cellar," said Helena innocently enough.

"Well, miss," said Mrs. Hopdyke, "I'll have ye understand that you ain't got nothin' in the cellar to give. What's there's mine—not your'n, an' you've no business a givin' my vict'als to peddlers, to get books with fur yerself. Here Marthy," she added maliciously, "take this 'ere book an' keep it—it's your'n."

Helena impulsively sprang forward. "You can't have it!" she cried. "He gave it to me, and if you mind the things I gave him to eat, I'll go without my supper, and that'll make up."

"None o' yer impudence, you little ingrate! You'll go without your supper anyhow, fur being so lazy. But it's all I could expect—yer father was a loafer, an' yer mother was worse. Go to yer room now, an' stay there till yer called, or I'll give ye somethin' to snivel for."

Martha bore away the book in triumph, and Helena's cup of bitterness was full. On reaching her little bare room she threw herself on the bed and cried, and

kicked her little heels high in the air, giving emphatic expression to her anger and grief.

"She's a mean stingy old thing, to mind a little bread and milk and cake and pie, when there's a cellar full of milk, and lots of cows, and four loaves of bread, and lots of pies and cakes. And she called my mamma worse than a loafer, and mamma told me if they talked about her not to listen. So I won't stay any longer. I'll just run away, and she can get somebody else to shell the peas, and wash the dishes, and sweep up, and pare potatoes, and tend the pigs, and watch the chickens and loop-holes, and—and all the rest!"

Then this precocious child of nine raised up, her face fixed and resolute. When it became quite dark, and Mr. Timothy Hopdyke was out milking the cows, and Mrs. Timothy was down cellar skimming milk, and Martha engaged in reading Helena's book, Helena stole softly down stairs and went into the garden. From under a currant bush she removed a large flat stone; then after digging a few inches into the earth, withdrew a package of musty mouldy paper, which guarded her only treasure—the little pearl jewel case containing the two letters. And with that, the child set out alone to face the world.

CHAPTER V.

MR. MARVIN and Billy had retired for the night. Mrs. Marvin sat looking over the weekly newspaper, when there came a low knock on the door. A moment later Helena Channing was excitedly ventilating her grievances.

"So I've come to say good-bye to you, and to Billy," she explained, "because I'm going away. I've left Mrs. Hopdyke's for ever and ever."

Mrs. Marvin gently inquired the cause for so sudden a move.

"She was mean to me," said the child; "awful mean! And she talked about mamma, and I promised mamma I wouldn't listen if they talked, and I won't. So I've run away."

"Where are you going?"

"I don't know; I haven't thought yet. But I'm going somewhere, so I've come to let you know."

Mrs. Marvin looked at the child with tears of sympathy in her eyes. Her motherly heart yearned for the friendless unfortunate girl, and she longed to shield her from sorrow, and harm, but was powerless to do so because of a cold-hearted tyrannical husband.

"Where is Billy? I must see him before I go," said Helena.

"Billy is in bed," was the reply; "but you can see him in the morning. Now my child," Mrs. Marvin continued, "I am very sorry for you, more sorry than you know and I will try to find you a better home

quite soon. But to-morrow you must go back to Mrs. Hopdyke; Billy and I will drive you there."

The child made no reply, but in her inmost heart she rebelled, and resolved not to go.

"I don't dare go back now," she thought. "Mrs. Hopdyke might whip me, and be meaner than ever, because I ran away."

"Come with me now," said Mrs. Marvin arising, "and I'll put you to bed—you're tired and sleepy."

"I haven't had any supper yet," said Helena, pitifully. "Mrs. Hopdyke was mad with me because I gave a poor man something to eat and she sent me to bed without my supper."

A flash of indignation shot from Mrs. Marvin's eyes, and while the child was appeasing her hunger, she was trying to plan some means for her immediate rescue.

In the morning when the first rooster crowed to announce the early dawn Helena arose, hurriedly dressed, and cautiously found her way to Billy's room to bid him good bye. But Billy was soundly sleeping. No care, no anxiety, disturbed his childish slumbers. For a moment she stood there in the grey dawn, undecided. She disliked to go without a word of farewell, yet she dared not wake him lest he speak out and betray her presence in the house to Mr. Marvin, who slept in the adjoining room. On a small table near the bed were some slate pencils, a jack knife and a lead pencil. Suddenly she tore off a corner from the brown wrapping paper around her treasure box, and with the lead pencil wrote a few words of farewell, again assuring him of her faithfulness, and promising to sometime return. Then carefully climbing on the

side of the bed she leaned over and kissed the sleeping boy's forehead.

"Dear Billy," she murmured softly, "I am going to leave you. O Billy, I've got nobody but you, and your mother, and it's so hard to go."

Tears were in her eyes; a great responsibility rested on her young shoulders, and she shrank from the ordeal before her. But fearful that Mr. Marvin would awake and discover her, she slid down and left the room. A few minutes later she was out in the world, alone.

After a farewell look at her old home and at the churchyard where her mother lay, she turned her face toward Saxtontown, and started off at a brisk pace. Within an hour a farmer came along on his way to a cheese factory with a load of milk, and offered to give her a "lift." She scrambled into the wagon and rode with him nearly to the town. On arriving there she wandered aimlessly about the streets, not knowing what to do, or where to go. As the people began to be more numerous in the street she felt bewildered and lost. Finally she mustered courage to knock on a door. To the woman who opened it she said:

"Will you please let me come here and live with you? I'll be a good girl and help do the work, and run all the errands."

"Who are you?" asked the woman, staring at her in surprise.

"I'm Helena Channing."

"Where do you live?"

"I don't live anywhere now, I did live with Mrs. Timothy Hopdyke, but I don't any longer, for I've run away."

Poor Helena. Her frankness re-acted unpleasantly, and after receiving a severe rebuke for being a bad girl, and an order to "go straight back home," she found herself once more wandering about. But children's minds are quick to receive impressions, and at the next place she sought admittance she omitted the "run-away" part of her story. Nevertheless she was not wanted. In vain she went from door to door, until at last, tired and hungry, she reached the end of the street where the houses were few and far between, and there threw herself under a large tree by the wayside to rest. The day was passing, night would come, and where could she find shelter?

"Nobody wants me," she sobbed. "There's no place for me anywhere. Even the Lord don't want me. He took my mamma, and left me alone; and now I've no place to go."

The child lay there crying until she heard footsteps approaching. Quickly raising up, a look of joy came to her pitiful, tear-stained face, for only a few paces away was the man who had given her the book the day before. Feeling that she had found a long lost friend, she ran eagerly forward to meet him.

"O sir, I'm so glad to see you!" she exclaimed, "for I didn't know what to do. I don't know anybody, and —nobody knows me, and they don't want to either."

When the stranger understood the situation his face became very grave. The child, anxiously watching his expression, said quickly: "O sir, please let me go home with you; I'll be very good, and do everything I'm told."

"It's impossible for me to do that," he replied. "I am a poor man, canvassing for books for a mere liveli-

hood. Besides, I live in Newburg on the Hudson—a long way from here. So you had better go back to Mrs. Hopdyke."

"I don't dare go back now!" said the child. "She'd be so mad at me that I don't know what she'd do. And," she continued with quivering lips, "she's done enough to me now. O sir," she pleaded, clutching his hand, "only take me, and I'll do all the work. I'll shell the peas, and mind the pigs, and the chickens, and—everything."

The man smiled wearily. Pigs and chickens he did not have, and fortunate was he if there were peas to shell.

"I'll sweep the house," proceeded the child eagerly, "and go to the barn and gather the eggs, and feed the hens, and——"

"Little girl," he interrupted, "I have no hens to feed, no eggs to gather, no barn to go to, and no house to sweep. My wife, my daughter Annie and I, live in three rooms, and there would be no place for you to sleep."

"I'll sleep on the lounge in the kitchen," she replied quickly, "and live on bread and milk. I wouldn't ask for any pie, or cake, or preserves."

"Bread and milk," he thought bitterly, remembering how hard the money was earned that bought the loaves of bread and the single quart of milk each day.

Helena's hope of life seemed depending on his decision, and he soon discovered that despite her years, she was a very persistent little specimen of humanity. Being a very kind-hearted man his sympathies were aroused in her behalf, and at last he decided to take her home with him. The Wilsons, his next door

neighbors, had no children of their own, and as they were comfortably off, perhaps he might persuade them to take her.

Helena, being both hungry and penniless, her new found friend stopped in the first house and arranged for her comfort until the next morning. Then he returned to Newburg, taking her with him. To his disappointment, however, the Wilsons were out of town, and would not return for two weeks. As a last resort he took her to his own home. His wife, Mrs. Ruden, was not at all pleased. She was a fretful, hardworking woman, who took in sewing to make both ends meet, and naturally looked upon Helena as a weight on her already overburdened shoulders.

Helena instinctively felt that she was unwelcome, but she was too tired and sleepy to lay awake thinking about it the first night there. The Rudens lived up two flights of stairs, and to Helena's intense disappointment had no garden, nor even a yard. Where to secrete her treasure she did not know. It was wrapped in brown paper, and resembled an ordinary parcel, but Mrs. Ruden's sharp eyes soon detected that Helena guarded it with jealous care. That night when the child was soundly sleeping in the narrow cot with Annie, Mrs. Ruden searched the room until she found the parcel, which had been hidden under the bureau on the floor. She removed the wrapper and started in surprise on beholding the contents. She tried to open the jewel case, but found it was locked.

"I wonder if she stole it?" Mrs. Ruden questioned. "Most likely she did, she acted so suspicious and secretive about it."

Curious as to the contents she vainly searched Helena's pockets for the key, but it was not there.

Several days passed—Helena was still in her new home, Mrs. Ruden having consented to keep her until the Wilsons returned. One morning, while the child was dressing, Mrs. Ruden discovered the chain and key on her neck. On asking what the key belonged to, Helena flushed, and hesitatingly replied that it was the key to a little box. Mrs. Ruden said nothing more, but she was firmly convinced of the child's guilt.

"The little thief," she muttered. "Somebody's taken her in the same as we have, and she's stolen from them. Most likely there's something valuable in that box, she keeps it hid so close; but I'll find out yet."

That night when the two girls were sleeping, she carefully unclasped the chain from Helena's neck, and removed the key. Then taking the jewel case from under the bureau opened it, only to find two letters; the top one addressed to Helena, to be opened on her fifteenth birthday. Mrs. Ruden knew she had wronged the child, and felt a pang of remorse; but curiosity prompted her to read the letters. Opening the one addressed to Helena, she read the following:

"CLYDESVILLE, N. Y., April 20th, 18—.

MY DARLING CHILD:—

When you read this I shall have long been in my grave. I have no legacy to leave you, no relatives, no friends. But you have my tenderest love, and blessing, and my prayer is that you may grow to be a good pure woman, with sufficient moral courage to stand

upright and steadfast through life. My strength is failing—I must be brief. I have already written a long letter to Mr. Sidney Bryan concerning you. I shall leave it with this, in your care. Take it to his address in New York City, and personally hand it to him. I think—in fact I believe—after reading it, that he will arrange for your future. My reason for waiting so long is, I do not wish to encumber him with the responsibility of a child; but at fifteen you can be a companion, rather than an incumbrance.

Now, as a last request, follow implicitly these instructions, and do not I implore you read the letter addressed to him nor permit any one else to do so. My darling, this will come to you like a voice from the grave, reminding you of your loving mother,

GERTRUDE CHANNING."

Mrs. Ruden read the letter twice through. Evidently "Sidney Bryan" was the one who had given the jewel case to "Gertrude," and Gertrude was Helena's mother. Mrs. Ruden took up the other letter, but she did so hesitatingly. Several times she turned it over in her hands, closely examining the seal. It seemed to fascinate her and the longer she held it, the more eager she became to know its contents.

"It could be opened and sealed again without detection," she mused. "I could warm the wax and stamp it with a key, or a thimble, and Mr. Bryan would never know the difference. And Helena will not see it for years to come, and by that time she will have forgotten the appearance of the seal, even though she has ever seen it. Besides, the child is in

my care. For the present I am her guardian, and am justified in knowing everything about her."

Mrs. Ruden tried hard to ease her conscience, and inveigle herself into the belief that her line of reasoning was right. But she could not, and the letter still lay in her lap unopened. Some powerful influence seemed to stand between her and the deed, forbidding her to commit it.

"This is mere fancy," she muttered. "There is no reason why I should not know its contents—I will open it!" She rose to leave the room, where she could read it by herself, before her husband came in. But at that moment, from some unaccountable reason, Helena suddenly awakened and sat up in bed. She saw the jewel case open on the table, one of the letters open beside it, the other in Mrs. Ruden's hand.

For the moment the sight seemed to bewilder her; she looked at the letters vacantly, as if in a dream. She felt for the chain about her neck; it was gone—so was the stupor. Springing from the bed, she confronted Mrs. Ruden, her eyes flashing, her lips speechless. The woman shrank from the child's gaze. It seemed to her as though the spirit mother had awakened her daughter and was looking at her through the child's eyes. At last Helena spoke. But to Mrs. Ruden it was the mother speaking through her.

"How dare you!" she exclaimed. "You had no right! It was not to be opened until I'm fifteen."

Mrs. Ruden laid the letter down. For the moment she could frame no defense. The child's angry, reproachful look unnerved her. Unable to endure it longer—and fearful lest Annie would awaken and discover her guilt, for she felt very guilty despite her

reasoning to the contrary—she left the room. But Helena followed, demanding the chain and the key. Mrs. Ruden gave them up, without a protest; then returned to the room and somewhat reasserting herself said:

"Helena, you are only a little girl. I am wiser than you, and better able to judge what is right. I have not intended to wrong you, nor have I done so. I found that valuable jewel case under the bureau, and naturally wondered how you came by it, for little girls don't usually have such things; and I considered it my duty to learn if it rightfully belonged to you. Then my interest in you prompted me to read your letter, thinking it might give some clue to your relatives or friends, and it has. The other letter—the one your mother forbade you to read—is not opened. See; here it is! Look at the seal and see for yourself. So don't take it so much to heart."

"Then, as though speaking more to the invisible mother than to the child, she resumed: "If there are any secrets in that letter which the world is not to know, they are secrets still. So be at rest."

Without a word Helena returned to her bed, and was soon sleeping. But Mrs. Ruden could not sleep. To her the scene meant much. She felt that Gertrude Channing was there, watching over her child.

"Yes," she mused, "she was surely here! Nothing can ever alter my opinion on that point. And she came here for a purpose. Yes; I see it all now, it's as clear as day. She intended Helena to live with Mrs. Marvin until she was old enough to go to this Mr. Bryan; but now that the child is thrown on the world, she wants her to go to him at once, and has used me as

the instrument with which to bring it about. She caused my curiosity to be aroused, she assisted me to open the box, and permitted me to read the letter addressed to Helena in peace, but she forbade me to read the other one, and succeeded in preventing me from doing so. Now she wants me to assist Helena in getting to Mr. Bryan. I know it; I feel it strongly. But who is this Sidney Bryan? What was he to Mrs. Channing? I wish I knew, but probably I never shall. Were I to open that letter now, she might appear to me in person. No, I dare not tamper with it, and whatever secret it holds shall be a secret still. But my duty is clear; I am to send her child to Mr. Bryan, she has impressed me with that fact, and were I not to heed her I believe she would haunt me through life."

CHAPTER VI.

A FEW days later Mr. Ruden left home on a two weeks' canvassing tour, and Mrs. Ruden decided it would be wise to get rid of Helena before he returned, for the child occupied a warm corner in his heart, and he might object to having her turned adrift. "Not that I would wrong her," Mrs. Ruden kept saying to herself; "but I know it's the best thing I can do to help her. Probably this Sydney Bryan is rich. Perhaps he was an old lover of her mother's. Anyhow, it's better for her to go. We can't keep her long, and the Wilsons might not want her at all. So if she's ever to go to him she'd better go now."

The day after Mr. Ruden left home, Mrs. Ruden told Helena the contents of the letter, and advised that she should lose no time in going to Mr. Bryan. Helena protested, thinking such a course would be in opposition to her mother's wish. But Mrs. Ruden succeeded in overruling her objections, and in convincing her that under the circumstances her going was the very thing her mother would wish.

Three days afterward she was ready to set forth. After many inquiries Mrs. Ruden had learned that Carl Oppenheimer, the grocer's boy around the corner was going to New York to meet his parents who were on their way from the fatherland. Carl was a stupid Dutchman, with a pink and white skin and straw-colored hair; but he was a kind-hearted boy, and promised to look after Helena and see her to the address given him. Mrs. Ruden felt some misgivings in entrusting the child to him; she would have much preferred some one of more intelligence and experience. But Carl could read enough English to find a name and number, and speak enough to make himself understood.

When the final moment of departure came, and Helena turned away clinging to Carl's big red hand, a feeling of sympathy sprang up in Mrs. Ruden's heart. She looked at Annie, her own child, so happy and free from care. Suppose she were ever fatherless, motherless, and turned out into the world alone? The thought caused a sigh to escape her lips, and a tear to moisten her eye.

"Helena, be sure to write me as soon as you get there," she impulsively called out; "and if you don't

find everything all right, or if he doesn't want you, come back with Carl. We'll manage somehow."

On arriving in New York, Carl looked at his big silver watch and found that he had barely time to take Helena to her destination and find his way to the steamship dock over in Hoboken. The city was almost as bewildering to him as it was to his little charge, but after numerous inquiries he found the far-famed Wall Street, and succeeded in finding the number indicated. They ascended the marble steps and entered a long wide hall, which in itself seemed to them a busy thoroughfare. Men were hurrying to and fro, messenger boys rushing in and out, each and all so intent on their own business that not one thought, one look even, was bestowed upon the child. She felt it too, and felt so isolated, so lost; and more firmly grasping Carl's hand, gazed about in wonder and awe. A man in uniform directed them to the elevator—a thing unknown to Helena. The elevator boy let them out on the fourth floor.

"You'll find Mr. Bryan," he said, "around there on the left—room nineteen."

Without difficulty they found the number, and saw on the door in big black letters: "Sidney Bryan, Banker and Broker."

Carl felt relieved. "Vell, dish ish de plaze," he said quickly; "und now me t'inks I get me back mit hurry to meet me fadder und me mudder." And thinking he had done his full duty he hurried away, leaving Helena standing there with her heart beating at a rapid rate.

Summoning all her courage she knocked on the

door. It was opened by a young man who wore eye-glasses, and carried a pen behind his ear.

"Are you Mr. Sidney Bryan?" she asked timidly.

"No, little girl; I am not Mr. Bryan."

"Well, I've come to see him; I was sent."

"Mr. Bryan is not here to-day," replied the clerk; "but if there's anything I can do for you tell me what it is."

"Doesn't he live here?" asked Helena earnestly.

The clerk surveyed the little black-robed figure quizzically, then smilingly replied: "Well, no; he doesn't exactly live here—this is his office. He lives uptown, but he has gone over to Philadelphia to-day, and won't be back before to-morrow."

Like a blow it occurred to the child that she was alone—abandoned as it were, in the great city. Quick as a flash she turned and ran quickly through the hall. "O sir," she cried to the astonished clerk, "please show me the way out. I must catch Carl—the boy that brought me here!"

The clerk stepped hurriedly to the elevator, pressed the button, and two minutes later Helena was rushing through the main hall into the street. For a moment she looked eagerly in both directions, then darted toward Broadway—the direction from whence they had come. But Carl had disappeared. On and on she ran, like a frightened fawn, until she reached Broadway. There she paused, and glanced up and down the apparently endless thoroughfare, while a look of terror settled on her face, and a cry of despair burst from her lips. She realized that it was useless to look for Carl; he was lost in the crowd.

To Helena, Broadway was an appalling sight. It

crowds of people, and the roar and rumble of its countless drays and cabs and carts, passing in a turbulent procession over the rocky pavement, made a scene so strange and wonderful that she became bewildered, and did not know which way to turn. She looked appealingly at the passers-by, but their stony stare, if they looked at her at all, impressed her with their utter indifference to her helplessness. She realized that she had lost Carl, and now felt that she was lost herself. She did not break down and cry; had she done so she would have found numerous advisers and protectors, who would have been only too glad to assist her had they known her condition, for with all their apparent selfishness New Yorkers have the largest hearts in the world. But their blank far away looks, entirely misunderstood by her prevented a direct appeal to anyone; and standing there on the corner of Wall and Broadway, opposite old "Trinity," she felt as if she had not a friend in the world.

Suddenly, far up the street, she heard a sound above the commotion which caused apparent terror to take possession not only of the horses, but of their drivers, and to momentarily stop the progress of the people who were passing. Almost immediately, out of a perfect jam of carriages, wagons and carts she saw a team of magnificent greys, madly galloping over the pavement, attached to a fire engine, which was whistling furiously. It had hardly disappeared down Rector Street when the hook and ladder wagon, clanging its gong, and loaded with firemen, many of them clinging to its sides, came dashing madly past, and then the crowd once more moved on as if nothing had happened. But all this to Helena—born and bred in a country

hamlet, far removed from such sights and sounds—was indeed terrifying and awoke in her most strange and unpleasant sensations.

At last she sighted the churchyard opposite, surrounding Trinity Church. That alone appeared restful—so restful, despite the babel passing its gates. To her it seemed like an old friend, it being the only familiar sight which had greeted her. Even the tomb stones, darkened with age, and green with moss, reminded her of similar ones in the quiet churchyard in Clydesville, where her mother lay, and where she and Billy had pledged themselves to each other. In her grief and despair she looked longingly across the street as to a sacred spot—a haven of rest. Watching her chance she boldly made an attempt to cross, dodging this way and that, now under a horse's head, almost under their very hoofs, around wheels, and between carriages, until she reached the other side unharmed.

The gates of Trinity Churchyard were open, and breathless and frightened, she hurried through them. Going around to the south side as far from Broadway as she could possibly get, she sat down on the stone ledge to rest. Close beside her was a grave, whose headstone was blackened by time, cracked in places, and covered with moss. The inscription read:

"In
memory
of
J O S E P H,
son of John and Mary Pell,
who departed this life
the 15th of February, 1802,
aged 6 years, 9 months & 10 days."

There was more, but it was so obliterated by the ravages of time as to be almost unreadable.

"Poor little Joseph Pell," she mused. "I'm glad he's not here in this dreadful city. I'm glad he's safe in Heaven, and I wish I was. O mamma! O Billy——"

At that instant a Sixth Avenue "L" train came thundering up to the station, under whose very shadow she sat. It seemed to her as though it were rushing directly upon her, and in alarm she sprang to her feet, and out of the way. On discovering there was no danger she again sat down, thankful that her mother did not lie where there was so much noise and confusion.

After becoming rested and somewhat calmed, the restlessness peculiar to childhood took possession of her and she rose from the ground resolving to go up town and find Mr. Bryan's home. "If he isn't there," she thought, "maybe his wife is, and I can stay with her till he comes back."

Leaving the churchyard she walked to the corner of Rector Street, then eager to escape from bewildering Broadway she turned the corner and wandered on as far as West Street. There she paused, not knowing which way to turn. Timidly approaching a man standing on the corner she inquired which way was uptown. He indicated the direction by a nod of his head, and Helena followed the direction.

"I sha'n't know when I get to the right house," she thought, "but after I've gone far enough to be 'up town' then I'll ask the people I meet, and most likely somebody will know where Mr. Bryan lives. If he lived in Clydesville everybody would know."

West Street was as difficult to walk as Broadway,

and far less pleasing, even to the child's sensibilities. She instinctively realized that she had suddenly come in contact with a rougher element. The very atmosphere was different. The pedestrians represented people of all classes, from the 'longshoreman, idling in front of a dive while waiting for a job, to the spruce traveler, hurrying to catch a ferryboat; while the stale meats, fish, and decaying fruits exposed to view gave forth an odor unknown to Broadway. After walking a few blocks, Helena was quite disillusioned, so far as her previous impressions concerning the superiority and grandeur of New York City, and city folks.

West Street presents an odd spectacle to a countryman—old or young—when viewing it for the first time. Its wharves, and wonderful shipping extending so far on one side; its junk shops, fruit stalls, "gents" clothing stores, peanut stands, Cheap John's bazaars, candy stands, butcher shops, street venders, and low dives on the other, and all with an utter disregard of the "eternal fitness of things."

On one corner was the happy frankfurter man, a familiar figure in certain parts of the city, and still more familiar at Coney Island, during July and August. This particular frankfurterer was a character, from his humorous blue eyes to his crownless hat and Joseph-like coat. In a voice proceeding from his stomach—if judged by the pitch—he repeated, hour after hour, without cessation or change of tone: "'Ere's yer red 'ot frankfurters, gents! Come on gents, walk right up, an' get 'em while they're 'ot, gents!" Whether the "gents" heeded his invitation or not, was apparently a matter of supreme indiffer-

ence to him. His only duty or thought seemed to end with issuing the invitation.

The day was oppressively warm, and the odor from the hot sizzling things, together with swarms of innumerable flies feasting from a basket of sticky-looking cakes near by, made the child feel faint and ill; nevertheless she stood as though fascinated, watching the writhing contortions of the fellow's otherwise happy-go-lucky sort of face. An organ grinder came along; a diminutive, bent, swarthy creature, resembling an ape as much as a man, and began turning out "The Babies on our Block." In an instant the man of frankfurters was spinning around to the tune, but his monotonous voice continued to pour forth "Red 'ot frankfurters' to the "gents."

A little farther on a man was selling oranges from a push-cart. Soon a policeman came pompously along, surveyed the man and the oranges, then helped himself to a couple of the largest, at the same time muttering a few words to the vender. The latter shrugged his shoulders, then reluctantly put his hand in his pocket and withdrawing a piece of silver, handed it to the blue-coat.

On the next block a poor pale sickly-looking specimen of humanity was selling shoestrings and cheap cuff buttons. "Move on; move on there, or I'll run yez in!" was the same blue-coat's order to him. The man of strings and buttons gave him a look of hate, not unmixed with fear; but he moved on.

Helena in her innocence did not know why the fat orange man with his obstructing push-cart was permitted to remain, while the thin shad-like vender who made no obstruction was made to move on, but the

raggedest urchin on the street could have easily told her.

As the poor wretch was moving away, a well-dressed and handsome woman, who had heard the officer's order, stepped up to the man and handed him a silver dollar which she took from her purse; then turning to the officer said calmly:

"Sir, your treatment of this man is very unjust and uncalled for." The officer gave her an impudent stare, but she coolly continued:

"Inasmuch as *you* are fortunate enough to eat and drink at the city's expense, why do you prevent this less fortunate person from earning enough to provide himself a bite as well?"

Then this officer of the law, with a scowl and an oath, replied: "I knows me own biz; an' I don't want no d—d cranks a interferin' neither. See?"

The lady threatened to report him to his captain, but he turned on his heel with a sneering laugh, and walked slowly away, his expression indicating that he and his captain were "solid," and that he considered her threat a good joke.

Helena had by this time become very tired. The excitement of the scenes she had witnessed had in a measure buoyed her up, but being unaccustomed to walking on pavements, she was almost ready to drop. Seeing a girl about her own age she accosted her, and asked if she were uptown yet. The girl's mouth opened wide; she stared at her a moment then burst into a yell of derision.

"Come 'ere, Mag," she called to another girl half a block away. "Come 'ere quick, an' git onter de greeny what's los', an's askin' if dis be's uptown."

"I'm not a 'greeny,'" returned Helena with spirit. "And I'm not rude and bold like you New York girl, either."

With that she went on, the coarse jeers of the two girls ringing in her ears as she went. Her ideas of city girls were materially changed. Once she had thought that to live in a large town or city, was the chiefest of all things to be desired. But child-like, judging the whole city—all cities, in fact—by her own limited and unpleasant experience, and all city girls by the two "toughs" she had just encountered, her mind was not only disillusioned, but greatly preiudiced as well.

CHAPTER VII

SUDDENLY Helena found herself in a large building of vast proportions. How she came there she did not know. She had no remembrance of opening or entering any door. Near her stood a big fat man, weighing out a pound of kidneys for an equally big woman, with a basket on her sleeveless arm.

"Where am I?" the child asked.

The man paid no heed, but continued to weigh the kidneys, taking two off the scales, then putting one back.

"Shure, an' it's yerself as should know where's yez 'am' widout axin'," said the sleeveless woman.

"I hope—I'm—not lost," said Helena as though in doubt.

"Divil a bit," returned the woman with a croaking

laugh. "Shure, an' it's in the market yez is; an' how thin could yez git losed in Washington market, the wan what iverybody knows is named after the father av yer country—savin' their graces, Adam an' Eve."

"Where is the way out and uptown?" asked Helena.

"Shure an' it's as straight as a string ahead. Jest follow the nose on yer face, widout turnin' to the right ner left, an' whin yez git there ye'll be after findin' it."

The child thought Washington market must be the largest building in the world long before reaching the uptown end, where she found herself as unexpectedly out of the building and on the street, as she had found herself off the street and within the building.

She wandered on as far as Vestry Street, then wearied and hungry turned the corner, and going a short distance sat down in the doorway of a deserted hall to rest and appease her hunger with one of Mrs. Ruden's sandwiches. On a cellar door close by, some smutty-faced urchins were playing craps. For a time she watched their game, then gradually her head drooped and ere long she was asleep—the pearl jewel case clasped within her arms.

Soon, from around the corner of Washington Street appeared a girl on the scene—a girl of some twelve years, hard-featured, matted-haired, and with pale watery blue eyes. She too, watched the game of craps, until her eyes suddenly sighted the little black robed figure in the doorway. Helena was a foreign element in that locality as the girl quickly discovered. Cautiously she pressed forward; nearer and nearer, to

the sleeping child. A portion of the wrapping had become torn, and worn away, revealing to sight one side of the pearl jewel case. A greedy, wolfish expression came to the girl's eyes. On tip toe she stealthily advanced, leaned over, made a grab, then darted down the street with her ill-gotten gain.

A dirt-begrimed boy, known as "Mikey de chump," witnessed the act, and with a howl of disapproval started in quick pursuit. The others dropped their craps, echoed the "chump's" howl, and followed.

Awakened by their shouts, Helena sprang up, discovered that her treasure was missing, and uttered a loud cry. On seeing the urchins disappearing around the corner, it occurred to her that they were the thieves, and with a pitiful shriek she started after them.

"Give it back to me!" she cried. "It's mine—from my mamma; O please give it back!"

A moment later she came upon them. "Mikey de chump," and the wolfish girl were engaged in a rough and tumble fight for the possession of the jewel case, which the others were enjoying in high glee. Helena caught sight of it under the girl's arm, and sprang forward, but one of the crap shooters held her back.

"Youse stay away, kid," he said, "if yez don' want ter be hurted, fer Moll de rat'll give youse a bat wid 'er fist, an' Moll's fist ain' none o' de sof'est."

By a dexterous move the "chump" wrenched the jewel case from under the girl's arm, and in triumph handed it to Helena.

"Now let up on yer snivellin'," he said. "Moll, she gived me a tussle, but I've tussled 'er all holler dis time."

Helena grasped her property, and began to pour out her thanks, but the boy, unaccustomed to such language, hung his head, while a dull red was visible beneath the grime on his face.

"Never youse min' 'bout givin' de chump all o' dat guff," said a frouzy, tow-haired hoodlum; "but jest whack up! Whackin' up's better'n givin' guff. See?"

"Whack up what?" asked Helena.

"I'll show yez!" replied the tow-head, making a grab for the jewel case. But Helena was too quick for him, and clasping it more firmly within her arms she darted from their midst.

"O no yez don't—yez don't play none o' dat!" exclaimed the miserable urchin, running after her. Soon she was surrounded by half a dozen of these greedy young street arabs, and in desperation she showed them the contents.

A yell of disappointment and disgust arose. The prospective jewels which they had supposed the child had stolen, and which she would be forced to divide among them, proved to be but two letters entrusted to her care.

"Give us de box, den!" shouted one. "Dat ain't so slow; an' youse can keep all de writin'. So jest whack over! See?"

A crowd had begun to gather—a curious morbid crowd, eager to see the "fun," but too indifferent, too indolent to care who was being wronged, or who righted. Then a police officer appeared on the scene.

"What's the row?" he demanded.

No one spoke. He sighted Helena—with flashing eyes, and tear stains still visible on her flushed cheeks.

He observed that she was not a child of the slums—that she belonged to a different atmosphere.

"What's the row?" he again demanded more sternly than before. Then one of the urchins spoke.

"De kid," he said, pointing to Helena, "got 'er stuff stoled by 'Moll de rat,' an' 'Mikey de chump,' 'e pitched inter Moll, an' took it frum 'er, an' gived it back ter de kid. Den 'Frouzy,' wanted 'er ter whack up, an' 'er wouldn't, 'cause der wasn't nothin' ter whack. Dat's de hull story, Mister Cop."

Before "Boldy" had done speaking the crowd had mostly disappeared, Moll and "Frouzy" having "sneaked" at sight of the officer.

"Now little girl," he said turning to Helena, "tell me who you are, and how you came here, and all about it."

Helena did not reply, not knowing where to begin or what to say.

"What's your name?" he again asked.

"Helena Channing."

"Where do you live?"

No answer.

"Tell me—you need not be afraid," said the officer, speaking as kindly as he could.

"I don't live anywhere now," she returned hesitatingly, "but I think I'm going to live with Mr. Bryan when he comes home."

"Where is Mr. Bryan?"

"A man told me he'd gone to Philadelphia."

"What man?"

"Mr. Bryan's man."

"Where is your home?"

"I haven't any."

"Who have you been living with?"

"With my mamma first, but she died. Then with Mrs. Hopdyke, and then with Mrs. Ruden."

"Where did your mamma live?"

"In Clydesville, and Mrs. Hopdyke lives there too."

"And Mrs. Ruden?"

"No sir; she lives in Newburg."

"Is she related to you?"

"No sir. She only took me in."

"When did you leave Clydesville?"

"About two weeks ago."

"Why did you leave there?"

The child hesitated, and became uneasy; but the officer insisted on knowing. At last she stammered out: "Because I wouldn't stay with Mrs. Hopdyke any longer, and nobody else wanted me."

"Why wouldn't you stay with Mrs. Hopdyke?"

"Because she was mean to me. I had to stay home alone, and wash the dishes, and mind the pigs, and knit the socks, and shell peas, and—and everything else. And then she gave my things to Martha, because Martha was her own girl, and I wasn't."

A remembrance of her past wrongs had caused the child to say her say with vehemence, and its conclusion was greeted with shouts of laughter from members of the hoodlum element which had gradually gathered about, curious to know what was "up 'tween de cop, an' de swell kid." The officer raised his club, and they quickly dispersed.

"Who took you from Clydesville to Newburg?" he asked, resuming the examination.

"Mr. Ruden took me."

"To his own home?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why didn't you stay there?"

"Because Mrs. Ruden didn't want me any longer. She said my mamma wanted me to come here and live with Mr. Bryan, and she said she couldn't afford to keep me any longer anyway, because I was always hungry, and ate so much bread and milk. I guess I did eat a lot of it; but she didn't give me much of anything else, so I had to, and I didn't have even enough of that."

"How did you get here?"

"Mrs. Ruden got a Dutchman to bring me; but she said if I couldn't live with Mr. Bryan that the Dutchman would bring me back."

"Where did he leave you?"

"At a big store in Wall Street, and then he hurried away and I couldn't find him."

The officer smiled significantly. "A clear case of abandonment," he muttered, mentally congratulating himself on his shrewdness, keen discernment, and wonderful detective ability.

"Well, little girl," he said, "this case must be investigated. In the meantime I'll hand you over to the Gerry Society, where you'll be well cared for. Now give me the full name and address of this Mrs. Ruden, and I'll see that you ——"

At that instant an old couple approached the officer. Evidently they had just arrived from the country. The man carried a big black shiny satchel, and a stout hickory cane; the woman, a carpet bag and a blue cotton umbrella.

"Say, Mister Policeman," began the old man, "can ye tell us which o' them there cars to git into to take us

up to East Tenth Street, whar our gal Mary Ann lives Ye see, las' summer, right after harvestin', she went an' got married to one o' them firemen o' your'n, an' he brung her down here to live; an' ma an' me has come down to pay her a visit. She was to met us at the boat landin' place, but she didn't show up; so we set out on foot, thinkin' mebbe we'd find her on the way. But Jimminy Christmas! Seems though we've met everybody but her; an' I must say, this town beats all I ever heard tell on fur bein' friendly an' sociable. Soon's we'd left the boat-shed everybody smiled at us as friendly like as if they'd knowed us all their lives, an' a whole parcel o' fellers tried their level best to git us to take a ride with 'em. They all had real nice covered buggies too! But we thought we'd better walk along, as we'd be more likely to meet Mary Ann, than if we was a ridin'. Pretty soon a boy wanted to carry our traps fur us, an' he was jest set an' determined on carryin' 'em too; an' I do declare if one boy offered to carry 'em a dozen did. I never did see such obligin' a lot of boys before. But say, Mister Policeman, mebbe I'm a takin' up your time with my yarnin'."

"O no; I'm glad to meet you," said the officer smiling.

"That's jest what everybody seems to be," continued the old hayseed. "I do b'lieve we'd be welcome to stop an' stay a spell in most any house in town, judgin' from the way folks kep' askin' us all the way along to come in an' hev somethin'. One feller he wanted to give me some cigars to smoke, but I didn't take 'em. A clay pipe's good enough fur me, an' once in a while, I takes a pinch o' snuff, an' I chaws a little, but not reg'lar. I used

to think city folks was awful stuck up; but jimminy crickets! these Yorkers is the freest folks I ever see. Why, one feller come along dressed up fit to kill. Sich style, whew! you'd a thunk to look at him that he was the proudest and conceitedest fop agoin', but he wasn't a bit. He come up to us real friendly-like an' asked if I wasn't Mister Rutherford of Harpersville, up on the D. an' H. road? I told him no, I was Simon Jenkinson, from Guilford, up on the O. an' W. Then he laughed an' said fur all the world I looked jest like his friend Rutherford used to look, but he hadn't seen him in quite a spell an' he might a changed somewhat. Then he remarked that we looked real tired, an' he was bent an' determined on our goin' with him to a nice place he knew on to hev somethin' to eat an' to git rested. But ma, she wouldn't stop. She said we'd git enough to eat when we got to Mary Ann's, an' she was in a hurry to git there. So we come on, an' the feller come too, and kep' a showin' us the sights, an' chattin' as friendly as if he'd knowed us all our lives. But all of a sudden ma, she spied you, an' says she: 'Simon, there's one o' them city constables, sure's I live.' Then the feller looked up quick, an' when he seen you he said you was a p'liceman, an' would give us all the directin' we wanted, an' as long as we wouldn't go with him, an' wouldn't accept nothin' from him, even fur old resemblance sake, why he guessed he'd have to bid us good bye an' hurry home. So then he hurried off, an' now as ma an' me is pretty well tuckered out, we've concluded to ride the rest of the way, seein' our Mary Ann says it only costs five cents a piece. I don't s'pose all them cars go past

Mary Ann's house, so if you'll tell us which is the right one, we'll be much obliged."

While the officer was cautioning the old couple to beware of such "sharks," as the one who had followed them for "old resemblance sake," and directing them to their route, Mikey the boy who had wrested the jewel case from "Moll de rat," stole cautiously to Helena's side and whispered:

"Does yer know what de cop's a goin' ter do wid youse?"

Helena comprehended enough of the hoodlum dialect to scent mischief, and glanced imploringly at her defender, who added in a tone to thoroughly arouse her alarm: "He's goin' ter put yez wid de 'ciety, an' den yez won't never git out no more; an' its worse'n bein' in de jug—dat's w'at Jerry says, an' 'e knows, 'cause his little sister 'er got took by 'em an' 'er hadn't done nothin' but sell papers on de street."

"What do you mean by being in the jug?" Helena asked in sudden alarm.

"De Tombs!" he added quickly. "But if youse wants ter skip wid me, I'll see yez out o' de scrape."

Without a word the child placed her hand confidingly in the "chumps" black sticky one, and away they went. Only for him, Helena would have been placed in charge of the sometimes over-scrupulous "Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children," and what the result would have been we are unable to say. Had the Society listened to her story, and read her mother's letter, it might have acted in accordance with the request it contained; otherwise, the child's life would have been to us a sealed book, and this story never been written.

When Mikey learned that his little charge wanted to go to Mr. Bryan's house, and that she could give no address other than "uptown," he expressed his surprise by a prolonged whistle.

"Hully gee!" he exclaimed. "Dere's t'ousan's an' millions o' housens up dere, an' how's a cove ter fin' de right one, widout no street an' no number?"

The prospect of going to Mr. Bryan was finally abandoned. Then what to do was the question. The child stood irresolute, not knowing which way to turn.

"Wouldn't your mother let me stay at your house for just to-night," she asked pleadingly.

Again the boy whistled. Poor Helena, in her innocence, and ignorance of life could form no conception of the boy's home. Could she have glanced into it, she would have fled in fear and disgust. A damp cellar, abounding in squalor, and vermin, was no place for her, as the street gamin instinctively knew; and shaking his head, he replied:

"Der ain't no room. De ole man an' de ole woman has de bed, an' Patsy an' Tim has de bunk, an' me an' Pete has de floor; an' besides dat, de ole woman 'er's got a jag on ter day, an' 'er wouldn' let yez in."

"What's a jag on?" asked Helena.

"A drunk—a booze," returned the boy in a shame-faced manner

"I think I'll go back to Mr. Bryan's place in Wall Street," said Helena. "Maybe the man I saw there will let me stay. I don't know where else to go."

The boy undertook to conduct her there evidently feeling the importance of his mission. Child of the slumbs though he was, born and bred amid immorality and vice, nevertheless, a spark—a large spark, too—of

manliness, dwelt beneath his repulsive exterior. He felt that Helena was different from the girls he knew, and becoming quite confidential, told her so.

"Youse ain't one bit like Moll," he said, "ner Sleepy Sal, ner Mag, ner one-eyed Luce, ner Beck de Pickle, ner none of 'em. Guess youse belongs to de swells, an' got losed. See?"

Helena did not exactly know what belonging to "de swells" meant, or whether she belonged to them or not, but frankly admitted that she was lost.

"Why do you call Moll 'de rat'?" she asked, as they walked along.

"Cause 'er squeals, an' 'er bites; an' Beck sulks, she's sour'n de Dutchman's pickles. An' Luce got one eye knocked out by "Paddy de 'orse," w'en 'e had a jag on. Paddy's a longshoreman, an' 'e's so big 'e kin drawer bales o' cotton on a truck like a 'orse."

The child was greatly interested in Mikey's wonderful accounts of the queer people belonging to his world, a world entirely apart from her own; and the numerous exploits attributed to them appeared to her almost equal to those of Jack of the famous bean stalk.

At last they found the place in Wall Street, and had entered the hall when the janitor saw them. "Git out, you rascal," he shouted to the boy. "What's the loikes o' you doin' here?"

Ever on the defensive against knocks, kicks and thrashings, Mikey, darted into the street. But Helena stood her ground and manifested some of her old spirit.

"He's not a rascal!" she exclaimed emphatically.

"He's a good boy, and he came here to show me the way."

"Bad manners to ye. An' if you plaze, who be you? An' if yer a decent girl where did yez pick up wid the loikes o' him?"

"I didn't 'pick' him up!" replied Helena with flashing eyes. "And I *am* a decent girl. I came to see Mr. Sidney Bryan—my mamma sent me."

At the mention of Mr. Bryan, the janitor's insolent manner instantly changed to fawning humility, and he informed her that Mr. Bryan's offices were closed for the day, and the last clerk gone. Bitterly disappointed the child went back to the street; but Mikey had disappeared.

"What shall I do?" she cried. "Where can I go?"

A child of the slums would not have been at all disconcerted—he, or she, would have known many places of refuge. But little Helena knew none of these. Hallways, alleys, dump carts, ash barrels and station houses, were alike unknown to her. Standing there on the stone steps she keenly felt her forlorn condition, and her young face seemed suddenly to age. The child was rapidly developing into the woman, overburdened with responsibility and care. She realized as never before that life was not altogether child's play.

CHAPTER VIII.

DESCENDING the steps Helena mechanically turned toward Broadway. Not that she wished to go there, for she shrank from its bustle and confusion, but because she had traversed the route before, and it was the only one with which she was at all familiar.

As in the morning she stood for a time on the corner hopeless and irresolute. Then, again looking across the street, she saw the grim churchyard. It seemed her only refuge, and once more she watched her chance to cross and enter within its sheltering gates. When there she sank to the ground and burst into tears. Thousands of people were hurrying to and fro in all directions, but not one of them saw, or heard the child's helpless cry of distress. Ere long two ladies and a little girl about her own age came out of the church. The child was beautifully dressed, and in a manner which the day before would have won Helena's admiration, and a wish to be dressed the same. But the poor friendless child had no thought now of dress, she was too wearied; and graver responsibilities claimed her attention. She sighed as she saw the little girl skip along so light hearted and free from care.

"O mamma!" she cried, while fresh tears streamed down her cheeks, "if you only were here with me, like that little girl's mother, how happy I'd be."

She rose from the ground, and going to the gate looked longingly after the ladies and the child, half tempted to run after them, tell them she had no place

to go, and ask to accompany them home and stay until morning. But before she could make up her mind to do so they were lost in the crowd.

Turning back she observed that the side door of the church was open, and aimlessly wandered in. When within the main body of the church she paused in amazement. The very grandeur and solemnity struck her with awe. The massive pillars and carved arches, the stained glass windows, the altar, everything, held her spellbound. Never before had she been in any church other than the little white chapel in Clydesville with its closed green shutters and whitewashed walls, and the magnificence of Trinity was beyond her conception.

It being near the closing hour the church was deserted by visitors. Presently Helena heard a foot-step, and on the far side of the church saw the sexton approaching. Fearing to be reprimanded if seen, she quickly dropped into a pew and laid down, glad of a few minutes' rest before entrusting herself for the night to the hard ground outside. For a long time she lay there half asleep, when suddenly the great clock in the steeple tolled six. She sprang up in alarm, and hastened to the door by which she had entered, but it was locked. She tried them all, but in vain; the sexton had gone and she was locked up in that great sombre place alone. The knowledge for a moment filled her with consternation, but unlike many children she did not scream, nor kick against the doors, but went instead back into the church and sat down to consider the situation. Being a very philosophical little girl, she wisely concluded that she was far better off where she was, than she would be out on the ground among the

tombs. "Besides," she mused, "I am safe here, for nobody can get in to hurt me."

Endeavoring to make the best of it and be as comfortable as possible, she removed her shoes to rest her tired little feet, then ate another sandwich, being careful not to scatter any crumbs on the seat or on the floor. The church had now grown quite dark, and with a sudden feeling of terror she realized that the dreaded night-time had overtaken her.

"O mamma! O Billy!" she moaned, "how sorry you'd be if you knew I was shut up in this big church alone, and couldn't get out. O mamma, can't you come to me? Please do; I feel so lonesome and so afraid. It's awful to be locked in like this."

Suddenly, as if by inspiration, she left her seat, and proceeding fearlessly to the altar, dropped on her knees, and clasping her hands, said aloud:

"Oh Lord, my mamma said that you could always hear me, and come to me; but you've never seemed to come. But now, O Lord, I'm in Your house, the place where You live, and now I feel sure You can hear me. O Lord, please bless Billy, and don't let him forget me; and please do let my mamma come to me to-night, and please do make Mr. Bryan come home from Philadelphia to-morrow, and make him like me, and let me stay with him. O Lord, please do hear me this once, and do all I've asked, and I will try to be a good girl and not bother You any more, and I'll never ask You for anything again. Amen."

Many prayers less crude, prayers clothed in more flowery language have ascended from that altar, but never a more sincere, or earnest one.

From a desire to be near the door in order to escape

unseen in the morning the child on leaving the altar went to the last pew on the right hand side of the centre aisle, and in number forty-seven, threw herself down on the cushion for the night. She no longer felt afraid, and soon was as peacefully sleeping as though in bed in her old home in Clydesville, with her mother by her side.

The night had far advanced. Broadway, in the neighborhood of Trinity, had at last become as quiet as a village street, except for the occasional rumble of a heavily loaded wagon, and the clock in the steeple striking the hours. The very stillness struck one as oppressive, and in strange contrast to the din and confusion of a few hours before. The massive buildings, so full of life then, were deserted now, and stood like grim monuments of ages ago, whose occupants were calmly sleeping in the churchyard, around which they stood in silent grandeur. Within the interior of the church the innumerable voices of the air—only heard when silence falls on the listening ear—filled the vast dome with mysterious whispers, and the noises of the world outside only penetrated its walls with a sound of deep solemnity. The moon had risen, and was shining through the stained glass windows, illuminating the south side with a peculiar glow, and causing the colors on the glass to stand out in bold relief.

Suddenly Helena raised up, hearing a noise like the rushing and rustling of innumerable wings, and saw advancing down the aisle what appeared to be a bright cloud, which was gradually assuming form. She gazed upon it as though spellbound, a look of wonder and awe on her face, which soon gave place to a look of joy.

With breathless eagerness she watched its approach, and, when she clearly recognized the face and form she loved so well standing there with outstretched arms, she sprang forward with a cry of gladness, and was folded lovingly to her mother's heart.

"O mamma! my own darling mamma," she exclaimed. "I'm so glad the Lord let you come. I asked Him to, and He has."

"My poor little darling," was the low far-away answer, "I did not have to come; I was already here. I am with you always."

"But I never see you mamma, and I am so lonesome, and I miss you so much."

"I have tried many times my child, to make you see me, and hear my voice, and to let you know I was with you, but I could not. A repelling atmosphere surrounded you, which my influence only could penetrate. That, you have often felt; Mrs. Ruden felt it too, and almost saw me that night when at my bidding she opened your letter. I could never appear to you clearly before, but to-night I found no difficulty."

"Mamma, what made you leave me so soon?" the child asked. "I went to sleep that night, and then I never heard you speak again. When I woke up in the morning you were gone, and oh! how I felt."

"I could not stay with you, Helena," replied the mother in a sad voice. "I tried, but was borne away by an influence I could not resist. But remember my little one, I am constantly watching over you, and——"

"Do you watch over Billy, too, mamma?" interrupted the child.

"Billy has his father and mother, but you are alone in the world my precious one."

"But mamma, please watch over Billy just a little too, and don't let him forget me. Were you with us," she asked suddenly, "when Billy and I were married?"

"Yes, darling."

"Well," added the child sadly, "Billy is all I have now; nobody else wants me. And when I'm a big girl I'm going back to him."

The mother smiled, but made no audible reply.

"I wonder," the child continued, "if Mr. Bryan will want me, and let me stay with him until I can go back to Billy?"

"Yes, Helena," was the glad reply, "I did not estimate him wrongly, and throw you on the mercies of a selfish world. You will see him to-morrow, dear, and he will take you to live with him, and you will learn to love him very dearly. I cannot come to him as I have come to you. I have tried, but he does not see me, nor hear me; but I want you to tell him for me that I ——"

The voice became indistinct; the form was dissolving into a misty fleeting vapor, and suddenly Helena found herself once more alone.

"O mamma! please don't leave me," she piteously shrieked. "O please come back—please do come back, or take me with you!"

But the radiance was gone, as though overshadowed and absorbed by the darkness, and Helena realized that her mother had disappeared.

"Perhaps the Lord won't let me see my mamma again," she moaned. "I promised that I wouldn't ask

to, and so I mustn't. But I'm so glad that mamma is with me, and can see me, even if I can't see her."

At the break of day Helena was awakened by the chorus of birds outside. Millions of them there seemed to be. She sprang up bewildered, unable for the moment to locate herself.

"O I know—I remember," she suddenly thought. "I'm in the church; and I dreamed that mamma came to me looking so beautiful, with a whole flock of angels behind her. It don't seem like a dream at all, it was so real and true, and she talked to me so natural; but I suppose it was."

It seemed a long time before the sexton unlocked the doors. The child began to fear that he was not coming at all, and that she would be a prisoner until the coming Sunday. But he came at last. On hearing his step she again dropped from sight within the pew, not daring to let him know of her presence.

"It's the Lord's house, and not his," she thought; "but the man might not think of it that way, and he might not like it because I slept here all night."

She watched her opportunity, and before long escaped unseen.

The next Sunday the usual occupants of pew forty-seven were there; but they did not know that only a few nights before—unbidden—a child had occupied it, guarded over by the angels, and her spirit mother.

Helena found her way alone to Mr. Bryan's office. The janitor looked at her in surprise.

"Indade, an' yer an 'arly bird," he said. "Nobody's down yit; an' as fer Mr. Bryan, he never comes till tin o'clock, an' it's only goin' after sivin now."

Three hours to wait—it seemed an age to the anx-

ious child. The janitor found a chair for her in an obscure corner near the elevator, wondering who her mother could be to send her out at that hour. At last he informed her that Mr. Bryan had just gone up to his office, and her troubled face brightened.

"I was sure he'd come," she thought; "and now I know the Lord heard me last night, for he's answered most everything I asked for already."

Mr. Bryan, a benevolent-looking man on the shady side of fifty, was seated at his desk when Helena timidly approached.

"My mamma sent me to you," she began. "That is, she wanted me to come when I was fifteen years old; but Mrs. Ruden made me come now."

Mr. Bryan looked at his little visitor with a kindly, though puzzled expression; offered her a chair close to his own, then inquired who her mamma was, and who Mrs. Ruden was.

"Mrs. Ruden is the women I was with," returned Helena modestly; "but she is very poor, and did not want me any longer, so she sent me to you. That's who Mrs. Ruden is. My mamma is——"

The child suddenly paused, unwrapped the jewel case, and handing it to him together with the key said:

"There's a letter for you in this, from mamma, and I guess it will tell you all about her, and about me, too, and why I've come."

Mr. Bryan looked at the jewel case earnestly, as though it recalled some bygone recollection, then unlocking it and opening the cover his eyes rested on the inscription: "To Gertrude, from Sidney."

A pallor swept over his face, and his voice trembled as he exclaimed:

"Child, who are you, and how came you by this?"

"I am Helena Channing," she replied quickly, "and the jewel case was mamma's, but she gave it to me."

Mr. Bryan leaned back in his chair greatly overcome.

"O Gertrude! Gertrude!" he murmured. "Do I hear from you again after all these years, and in such a manner as this? Through your child, and—*his*. O Gertrude! this is too cruel; I would not have believed it of you. Child," he exclaimed abruptly, "where is your mother?"

"Mamma is dead."

"Dead? Gertrude dead?" he repeated, a deeper pallor overspreading his face. Arising from his chair he left the room, going into an inner and strictly private office, where for a time he paced the floor in great mental agitation. At last he tore open the sealed envelope, and read the following:

"CLYDESVILLE, N. Y., April 20th, 18—.

DEAR SIDNEY:—Forgive me for intruding myself upon you, and do not cast this letter aside unread, for when it reaches you I shall be in my grave. I am dying, friendless and alone, except for my little darling child, who will soon be an orphan.

Oh! Sidney! I know not what to say to you. Words are inadequate to express all I wish, but if I could only see you once more, and on my knees crave and obtain your pardon for my cruel desertion, then I could die in peace. I have no excuse to offer for my

sin. You were the kindest, and best of husbands, and I, your faithless wife, did not appreciate you until too late. I do not attempt to excuse my course—there is no palliation; but try, Sidney, to think of me as kindly as you can. Remember I was very young—a mere girl of nineteen, thoughtless and gay. You were much older and wiser than I. But believe me, I was faithful to you even in thought, until Robert Channing crossed my path; and never did I bring actual dishonor to your name. He was handsome and clever; he flattered me, and I, foolish young thing that I was, fancied I loved him. His influence over me was great; I listened to him, and alas! in a moment of temptation I forgot my marriage vows, my duty to you, and went with him. He took me to South Dakota where, as you know, I secured a divorce and married him.

Soon after going, I wrote you a long letter, confessing all; but I did not tell you how unhappy, how remorseful I was, nor of the severe struggle I had with my better self ere I was persuaded to take the final step. But it was too late to go back to you. I had chosen my path, and although a thorny one it proved to be, I followed it to the end until he died, leaving me with my infant child, Helena.

Oh, Sidney, you know not what I have suffered—how severely I have been punished. But the end is nearly here. Only for my innocent child I would gladly go, and be at rest. I hope to have her cared for by a kind-hearted neighbor until she is fifteen years old; then I want her to go to you. When I remember your kind generous heart, I feel sure you will not turn her helplessly adrift.

I know I am asking something unheard of, but I know not where else to turn; you are my only hope. Try, Sidney, to forget that she is my child—or his. Think of her only as a poor friendless orphan. I know how generously you have shielded me—shielded my name even after my cruel desertion. I know about your going to Mexico, and later how you caused our Eastern friends to think I had died during our travels, rather than let them know the disgraceful truth. When I think of your past kindnesses I am sure you will not disregard my dying request.

I can write no more, for my strength is failing; but I cannot close without imploring you once more to take my darling and care for her; and never, oh! never, let her read this letter, or get a suspicion of its contents.

Yours, in hope and remorse,
GERTRUDE."

CHAPTER IX.

MR. BRYAN carefully folded the letter and laid it away. His agitation had passed; a calm, amounting almost to apathy, possessed him. He leaned back in his chair, covered his face with both hands, and for a long time sat reflecting on a bitter chapter in his life—a chapter which was a sealed book to all the world except himself.

He well remembered the letter Gertrude had written soon after deserting him for Robert Channing. Her

"confession," she had called it. It was a strange letter for a runaway wife to write her abandoned husband. It was more like what an erring daughter might have written to a tender, and well-loved parent, begging his forgiveness, and filled with expressions of regret, and remorse, for the one left behind.

Mr. Bryan, although much older than his wife—old enough in fact, to have been her father—had never doubted her affection for him. But a time came when she grew strangely restless and unlike herself. One day she would be eager and expectant; the next, depressed and melancholy. But he was far from suspecting the cause.

At a theatre party Gertrude had met handsome Bob Channing, in company with Helen and Will Belaires together with several others—all of excellent family. Helen Belaires was a particular friend of Gertrude. Will, her brother, was home from college on a vacation, and somewhere about town had fallen in with Bob Channing. Finding him very clever, and in every way agreeable he had, without investigating his new friend's character, introduced him into his own home as well as to a number of his intimate friends.

Bob's deportment had been so exemplary, and being endorsed as it were, by the Belaires, he secured without difficulty a small circle of good acquaintances.

Later, Gertrude with Mr. Bryan attended a musicale in Mrs. Belaires' drawing-room, where she again met him. From that time on they met repeatedly—at the matinee, the theatre, on the Avenue, and at small receptions. Before Will Belaires returned to college, he called one morning to bid young Mrs. Bryan good-bye, bringing Bob Channing with him.

Gertrude at that time would not have admitted even to herself that she entertained for Channing more than a passing regard, and would have been horrified at the bare possibility of ever leaving her husband for him. But Channing was hopelessly infatuated with her, and being of loose morals, did not scruple to make the infatuation mutual; and too soon he succeeded,

On discovering that she was not indifferent to him, he put forth every effort to win her affection. He wrote charming little notes, so perfectly proper in their tone, that no one could have offered a word of criticism, except from the fact of their having been written at all. But to her—reading as she did between the lines—they contained a silent language of their own. Then began her restlessness, and eagerness; followed by fits of melancholy. Young Channing haunted her dreams by night, and her promenades by day. She seldom went out that she did not meet him before returning home. Ere long he ventured to make formal calls, at conventional hours, his deportment being strictly proper in every particular. Had it been otherwise, had he by one word exceeded the bounds of propriety, Gertrude would have cancelled his name from her list of guests. But he was too much of a tactician, and too diplomatic, to run any risk of expulsion.

But a day came when he permitted his eyes to express what his lips had never dared, and with silent pleasure he saw that she was far from indifferent to him. At last when he considered her so sufficiently under his influence as to be unable to resist him, he ran in one afternoon, ostensibly to bid her good bye.

"I'm going away," he began in a regretful tone, "and have called—perhaps for the last time."

Closely watching the effect of his words, he observed with satisfaction, that a quick shade passed over her face.

"You surely will come back?" she asked in a low quiet tone.

"I hope to, certainly," he returned, his look and voice expressing unmistakable significance. "But," he resumed despondently, "we can never speak with any degree of certainty regarding the future."

A pain was at Gertrude Bryan's heart; she realized that she loved this handsome young fellow as she had never loved before, and now he was going out of her life—perhaps forever. For a time they conversed in a desultory manner, then he rose to go.

"Good bye," he said, offering his hand. She gave him hers in return, which he clasped with a gentle pressure. Their eyes met—met in a long silent look. Then prudence was thrown to the winds, and he impulsively clasped her to his breast.

"My own darling!" he exclaimed. "My dearest love! how can I ever leave you?"

She drew back, half indignant, and thoroughly frightened.

"Forgive me," he said quickly. "I did not mean to—it was an impulse I could not resist. Please do not be angry," he pleaded. "I really did not intend to so far forget myself."

An older and more worldly wise woman would have understood him better; but Gertrude Bryan was not only inexperienced, but in love with the man who sued for her pardon, and after much pleading he was

forgiven. Having gained his point, he—manlike—straightway repeated the offence, going even a step further, and snatching a kiss from her lips. Again he begged pardon, reminding her that he might never see her again and, in the subtle language of a lover, trembling on the verge of a declaration of his love, not daring to openly proclaim it, he prevailed over Gertrude's affected indignation—although to him it was real enough—and, as a matter of course, was again forgiven. He finally took leave in a rather joyful state of mind for an ardent young lover about to be forever separated from the woman he loved.

The next day, while Gertrude was brooding in solitude, living over again and again the scene of yesterday, and wondering if he were yet far away, or would ever return, a letter arrived from him in which he wrote: "You have not been out of my mind one moment since we parted. I am miserable without you—am longing to see you again—am only happy when with you. I have given up going away, or even the thought of it, when it means so much to me, and I should be so miserable. So I shall remain, that I may be near you; and shall live chiefly in the hope of seeing you as often as you will permit me."

Mr. Bryan soon detected a great change in his young wife. To him, she was at times irritable, and exacting; again, more loving than ever, as though endeavoring to atone. She grew nervous and fretful; her depression increased until, becoming really alarmed, he decided to travel, thinking a change of scene might be beneficial.

"Gertrude dear," he said one morning, "how would you like a trip to Mexico for the winter?"

For a time she considered the matter in silence. It would mean a long separation from Channing. She knew her infatuation for him was becoming more and more intense every day, and her love for her fatherly husband was gradually melting. Yet she seemed unable to resist Channing's ardent attentions, although she was at last beginning to look upon her acquaintance with him as something more than a harmless flirtation—as she had frequently eased her mind by calling it—and liable to seriously compromise her if not discontinued; besides she wanted to do right. Here was an opportunity offered her to escape from the influence by which she was held. Impulsively throwing all personal inclination aside, she answered:

"I should like it, Sidney, above all things; a trip to Mexico would be delightful indeed."

"My darling," he returned in a glad voice, "I shall endeavor, I assure you, to make the trip a delightful one. I have some business matters to look after in Chicago, but after leaving there, the rest of the time shall be devoted entirely to your pleasure; and I trust when we return you will be more like yourself. It has worried me of late, more than you know, to see you so changed."

Kissing her fondly, he started for his office down town. She watched him until he turned the corner of Fifty-seventh Street and Fifth Avenue, then going to her room and locking the door, burst into tears.

"O Bob!" she cried, "I love you! I love you! I have tried not to, but I cannot help it! and oh! I am so wretched, so guilty. Poor Sidney, how good and kind he is. He gratifies my every wish, surrounds me with every luxury, and yet, Heaven help me, I do not

—I cannot love him as I ought. How cruelly I have deceived him; poor old darling. I am unworthy of him, and I wish I were dead! I shall be miserable the rest of my life, and I deserve to be."

She sank into a chair, feeling terribly depressed, and heartily wishing Robert Channing had never crossed her path.

"What is done, cannot be undone," she thought; "and thank Heaven it's no worse! He has kissed me many times, but he never shall again! I loved Sidney until *he* came; at least I thought I did, and was calmly happy. But now—alas! the future seems a joyless one. Well, it's fate, I suppose, and I cannot avoid it. But I'll go to Mexico, and try to forget Bob; and when off there alone with Sidney, I'll atone for the past, and make him happy at least, by leading him to believe that I am."

That same afternoon young Channing called. At first Mrs. Bryan determined not to see him, but quickly changing her mind she decided that this once—only once, and the last time—could do no harm. So she descended to the drawing-room fully resolved that it should be their final interview.

He was greatly surprised and disappointed to learn of the tour in prospect, and protested strongly, urging her in vain not to go. "I gave up going away," he said, "because I could not bear to leave you, and now you are going to leave me."

A very affecting scene ensued; and he had the pleasure of seeing her in tears because of their parting.

The following week the Bryans started on their tour, stopping in Chicago for a few days. The second day

after their arrival, while Mr. Bryan was out attending to business, a bell boy of the hotel handed Mrs. Bryan a card with the inscription: "Mr. Robert L. Channing." Her cheeks paled, her heart beat rapidly; for the moment she felt powerless. The fact of him boldly following her to Chicago was unnerving.

"The gentleman's waiting in the reception parlor," said the boy, observing her blank look.

"Very well," she returned nervously.

"What shall I do?" she exclaimed as the boy withdrew. "If I refuse to see him it might create comment in the hotel; besides, he will be sure to wait until he sees me, or receives a message." She felt really alarmed at his persistence.

"Suppose he were to follow us to Mexico? What would I ever do? What, indeed will be the outcome of all this? Yes," she decided, "it is best to see him, and have the matter settled once and forever. I shall tell him that even our acquaintance must cease—that it is my wish. I have changed my mind scores of times through his persuasiveness, but all that is past. This time I shall not waver. Really the affair is becoming serious. O Sidney! why are you not here? I need you, I need you."

With grave misgivings she went to the parlor, and to her intense relief, Bob Channing was the only occupant of the room.

"How did you ever find us?" she asked nervously, after a rather formal greeting.

"Easily enough," he replied, not in the least discomposed by her manner towards him. "Knowing you were to stop in Chicago, I had no difficulty in locating

you when once here, and happily I made a good Yankee guess, and hit it right the first time."

Then becoming serious, he told her how dearly he loved her; that life without her was not worth living, and that he could not, and would not exist apart from her.

She listened to his vehement outburst in amazement and alarm, then besought him to go, lest someone would overhear him. But she might as well have talked to the wind. He had become desperate through fear of losing her. Soon footsteps approached, and a party of guests entered the room.

"Let me go to your private parlor," he suggested in a low tone. "Surely there can be no impropriety in that."

"I dare not," she protested faintly. "Please go now!"

But he had no such intention. So nervous as to scarcely be accountable for her actions, she turned to leave the room, and to leave him as well.

He knew she loved him, but he was not quite sure of her yet; and he meant to win her over, beyond a doubt, before leaving her again.

"Yes, she loves me," he quickly reasoned, "and that is an important point gained. Love will work wonders, and overlook much. She will forgive a bold step, and—perhaps I'll win her yet."

With all the *sang froid* of a man of the world, he calmly followed to her very door. Not daring to have a scene in the public corridor she said:

"You may come in for one moment—no more."

In her parlor he again pleaded eloquently for her entire affection. But she was too troubled, and appre-

hensive lest her husband should unexpectedly come in, to pay much heed.

"Go, I beg of you!" she exclaimed. "Mr. Bryan will find you here, and what explanation could I possibly make? Surely you do not wish to compromise me?"

"Compromise you? never!" was his earnest reply. "Rather than that, I would not remain another moment. But remember, dearest, I have come a long way to see you, and you are soon going far away. Don't be cruel, then, and force me to leave you so abruptly. Come with me for a drive, where we need not fear interruption."

In her eagerness to have him go, she consented. He suggested that she should leave a note for Mr. Bryan, as that would explain her absence, and prevent any inquiries at the office in case he returned first. Acting on his suggestion, she wrote:

"DEAR SIDNEY:—I am going out for the afternoon, and may not return until late. Do not worry, as I shall be with a friend. GERTRUDE."

Fifteen minutes later they were in a carriage whirling away; forgetful of time, forgetful of everything, in the joy of being together again. He was pleading with her to reconsider her cruel resolve, and not to cast him off. She was struggling to resist his hypnotic influence, and to stand firm in her intention to never see him again after returning from this drive. On and on they went until the city, left far behind, had disappeared in a cloud of smoke. At last there was a jolt, a crash, and they were thrown forward from the seat.

"De wheel's off, mister!" shouted "Cabby," in a startled voice. He had been dozing, and felt somewhat shaken. "Lucky de hoss didn't get skeered, an' run away," he continued, opening the door to see how his passengers were faring. "She's gentle as a lam' fo' shuah, else der's no knowin' whar we'd a been at now."

To her dismay Mrs. Bryan learned that they were eight miles or more from the city, and on a lonely road seldom frequented, and quite remote from conveyances of any description. Besides, the sun was setting; soon it would be dark—terribly dark, with neither moon, electric light, or gas.

"Why did you bring us so far?" she sharply demanded of the driver.

"De gemman's orders was to drive on till he said 'stop,' an' long's he didn't say stop, Ize done driv' on," returned Cabby in self-defense, his ebony face shining in prospect of the big fare forthcoming.

"What shall we do?" exclaimed Gertrude, in genuine distress. "Can't the wheel be fixed?" she asked suddenly.

"Not to-night, missus, 'cause de hub's busted."

Gertrude groaned. "Eight miles away," she repeated. "Night coming on, and not a human being near. Why did you bring us on this lonely road?" she again demanded.

"'Cause de gemman say to git away frum de noise, an' de rumble, an' drive whar der was none; so I done driv' out heah, 'cause dis am de mos' quietes' place I knows ob."

She walked a few paces away in disgust, Bob meekly following—glad in his heart that the accident had oc-

curred. "Nothing more opportune could have transpired," he reasoned. Aloud he said:

"Don't feel so, Gertrude darling. No one was to blame—accidents will happen, you know."

"Dar's a house ober dar," called out the cabman, pointing to a farm house not far away. "Mos' likely you ken stay dar till I done git fixed up."

"A good idea," said Channing. "We'll test the Illinois' hospitality. You wait here, dear," he said to Gertrude, "while I go and see what the prospects are for some supper, and a night's lodging if necessary." Fearing she would protest he hurried away.

"Do try," she called out, "to get a carriage, that we may return to-night."

At the farm house a tall gaunt woman answered his knock, to whom he made known his wants.

"Wall," she said, "ye can't git back to the city to-night, 'cause I ain't got no wagin, an' the only horse I keeps happens to be a cow. I'm a widder, an' lives here all alone, an' ain't got no men folks of no kind. I makes my own garden, an' weeds it, an' digs it too, an does all the chores. When Caleb, my man, was livin' we kept a horse an' wagin; but when the Lord took him I sold 'em off."

Bob kept quiet until this voluble creature stopped to take breath, then said: "Can you give us some supper, madame?"

"Wall, it's sorter sudden," she returned, "an' I ain't noways prepared fur company. Things is run sorter low, 'cause to-morrow's bakin' day. I et up the last piece o' pie fur breakfast this mornin' an' the last bit o' sweet cake fur dinner this noon; but there's a bin o' potaters, an' a half bar'l o' pork down cellar. An' I've got

most a hull loaf o' bread, an' a churnin' o' fresh butter, an' a bowl o' apple-sass, an'—O yes! a lot o' fresh laid eggs. So 'f you think ye kin manage on that, why, yer welcome.

Bob Channing thought they could manage very nicely. Then rather hesitatingly, and with a look over his shoulder to see that Gertrude was not within hearing, he said:

"I don't suppose we can get back to-night, and—would it be convenient for you to accommodate my wife and me until morning?"

"So fur's the sleepin' goes," she returned briskly, "it's easier'n the eatin', fur I've got plenty o' rooms, an' two spare beds. Good ones too, I made the ticks myself, an' stuffed 'em with live geese feathers of our own raisin'. Caleb an' me used to keep geese, but 'twas so much trouble to look after 'em, after Caleb, was took, an' do the pickin' of 'em that I've let 'em all dwindle out.

Bob walked slowly back, scarcely knowing how to inform Gertrude of what he had done.

"Have they a carriage? Can we go back to-night?" she asked eagerly as he approached.

"No, dearest; they have no carriage, and the 'they,' is but a lonely female, who has lived in single blessedness ever since her man, Caleb, was 'took.' But we can have a supper of salt pork and potatoes, and bread and apples-'sass,' and—we can be accommodated until morning."

Gertrude was terribly distressed; not because of the plebian supper in prospect, but because of the explanation she must make to her trusting husband in the morning.

Channing held a hurried consultation with the driver, after which the latter unharnessed the horse, and mounting it, started back toward the city, leaving the broken down carriage by the wayside.

CHAPTER X.

ROBERT and Gertrude walked in silence to the farm house, being too preoccupied with their own personal difficulties to indulge in conversation. As they opened the gate latch Mrs. Carter, their hostess, appeared in the doorway.

"Walk right in an' make yourselves to home," she said, "an' I'll have supper ready in a jiffy. How d'ye want yer eggs—biled er fried, er poached, er scrambled?"

Gertrude had no choice. "Give 'em to us 'biled, an' scrambled," said Robert, as seriously as a judge. "That is, if it's not too much trouble."

"Laws no! 'taint no trouble whatever to bile eggs, nor to scramble 'em neither. So jest excuse me fur a spell, while I put 'em on, an' git the table sot."

Gertrude had smiled for the first time since the accident. Robert took courage, and directly they were alone he said:

"Now, dearest, please do not be angry with me when I confess to you what I have done. Promise that you will not."

"What is it?" she asked in a faint voice.

"Well, you know some country people have very queer notions," he began apologetically, "and fearing

this woman—a queer specimen, by the way—would not permit us to remain otherwise, I told her that you were my wife, and now, darling, she must not suspect differently."

Mrs. Bryan grew pale. "Oh, Robert Channing!" she exclaimed, "how could you do it. My God! to what deception have you brought me? I will not permit it!" she suddenly cried. "I will tell her the truth and tell her that you were merely joking."

She rose to carry out the threat, but he caught her within his arms.

"My love," he said reproachfully, "you must do nothing of the sort—surely you can trust me. I only wish it were true—that you were in reality my wife. And why are you not, Gertrude? I love you as man never loved before. Let me from this hour call you my own. Will you, Gertrude darling?"

His words were uttered with a force which almost shattered her intention to resist him. He kissed her repeatedly as she struggled to free herself from his embrace.

"You must not talk to me like that," she cried excitedly. "I will not listen! I have one of the best husbands on earth, and I will not be unfaithful to him, no, not even for you!" Then she burst into tears.

He did not like to see her so distressed, yet he felt that the fact of her emotional nature being aroused was another point scored in his favor. A bitter defiant woman is difficult to manage, but a woman in repentant tears is easily won. He began to feel very sure of her. "I love her," he mused, trying to ease his conscience, "and she loves me. She must be mine; she shall be mine!" The thought of Mr. Bryan,

the wronged husband, did not trouble him particularly. His plans were carefully laid, and if successfully carried out, he felt that all would soon be well.

"Gertrude," he said tenderly, "please don't cry any more. You are nervous and worried, but you need not be. I will see you safely through this unfortunate affair. Come now, dearest, dry your eyes. Mrs. Carter will wonder at your grief. After supper we will go to a room by ourselves, and I will tell you of a plan I have for the future."

Directly after supper Channing said to his hostess: "My wife is very tired, Mrs. Carter, and if you will kindly show her to a room we will not trouble you any more to-night."

"Which room d'ye want?" she asked bluntly. "One spare room's down stairs, an' t'other one's up stairs next to mine, you ken take yer pick."

"I think the one down here will be preferable," he returned. "We are both quite fatigued, and it will save my wife from climbing the stairs."

"Then Mrs. Bryan rose, and speaking very calmly said: "As you are so tired, Bob, and prefer a room down stairs you shall have it. As for myself, I prefer to sleep up stairs. Now Mrs. Carter, I am ready if you will kindly show me up. Good night Robert, and pleasant dreams."

Without another word she followed Mrs. Carter up the stairs. Robert looked longingly after her, speechless with surprise and disappointment at her abrupt desertion. He felt chagrined too, and not quite so sure of her as he had been a short time before; but that fact only increased his ardor.

The next morning Cabby returned for them, and

they started back at a rapid pace. For a time Robert was silent and moody. He felt rather crestfallen over the failure of his scheming. He had earnestly hoped —even believed—that before the return trip, Gertrude would have been so completely his own that willingly, eagerly, she would turn to him for life. But he keenly realized his mistake. She was not his, nor was she likely to be, unless he made some sudden and fortunate move. She was speeding back to her doting husband with all possible haste, and if she escaped him now, he knew she would be lost to him forever; that his influence would be at an end;—her present infatuation for him would gradually turn to contempt. And if she made a full confession to her husband it probably would be worth his life to attempt to see her again. The thought was humiliating, galling, and not to be endured.

Gertrude was pale and haggard, having passed a sleepless night and taken no food. "O Robert!" she exclaimed suddenly, "What explanation can I possibly make? Oh! this is terrible, terrible! Advise me; do."

"My darling," he replied quickly, "my advice is to make no explanation whatever, other than a written one; and that only when you are far away, and safe with me. You must not see Mr. Bryan at present; it would never do. He would repudiate you, and kill me. My love, there's no use in denying the fact: you belong to me—it's the destiny of both of us."

In vain she protested and argued; his answers were ready, plausible, full of love, and affectionate pleading. Once again she was under his magnetic influence. She tried to resist, but his will was stronger than hers.

She became helpless in his hands, passive to his caresses, and at last weakly consented to unite her destiny with his. Fearing that she might alter her mind as soon as she had reconsidered the step, he drove rapidly to the railway station, bought tickets for a city in the far west, and hurried her into a compartment.

"Now, my darling, you had better write a few lines to Mr. Bryan," he advised. "This train does not start for thirty minutes. You have ample time, and it will end his suspense as to your whereabouts, and prevent him from making an outcry."

Her face paled. She rose as though to turn back, but he was ready for an emergency.

"Here is paper and pencil," he said quickly. "Now hurry, dearest, as I wish to take the note out and post it myself."

Mechanically she sat down and wrote :

"DEAR SIDNEY :—Forgive me and forget me. I am leaving you forever. Do not grieve, for I am unworthy of your grief or affection. I will write later, explaining all.

Your faithless wife,

GERTRUDE."

While Robert was out posting the letter she discovered in her pocket-book the check for one of her trunks, which on her arrival in Chicago had been transferred and stored in the baggage room to wait until they resumed their journey. The trunk was a large one, filled with valuable clothing, among which were the twenty-two button gloves, the costly fan, the satin

slippers and silk stockings, which years later appeared so condemning in the judgment of some of the Clydesville folk. Robert considered it a fortunate coincidence, and handing the check to the porter, bade him hurry and see that the trunk was checked for that train.

For awhile Gertrude sat silent and pensive. Then she suddenly rose, her face white and resolute.

"Robert," she said in a low firm voice, "I cannot go! The thought comes over me with a death-like chill. My husband planned this trip solely for my pleasure, and I am not heartless enough to leave him. I am going back! He will listen to me, and believe me; he is so kind, so ——"

"My darling," interrupted Robert, clasping her hand, "you certainly do not love me, or you would not wish to break my heart."

"Love you!" she repeated "Heaven knows I wish I did not. I love you too well; but I cannot wreck his life. He loves me too, and my duty is to him. I have already wronged him almost beyond reparation, but I have reached the end. I am awaking; and thank Heaven I can return to him not entirely dishonored."

She opened the door, and stepped out into the car; but at that moment the train began to move away.

"Oh God!" she cried. "I am lost!" Re-entering the compartment she sank into a seat, and burst into violent weeping.

But Robert had won. She could not return now—it was for ever too late. Her note would reach Mr. Bryan before she could, and that could never be satisfactorily explained. Truly Satan helps his own.

CHAPTER XI.

WHEN Mr. Bryan received his wife's note he was like one paralyzed. All night long he had wondered and conjectured over her absence and puzzled his brain concerning the friend whom she had referred to. Why she had left him for all time, of her own accord, he could not comprehend. He had indulged her every wish; had planned this trip to Mexico expressly for her pleasure, and he thought he possessed her entire affection. Hour after hour he sat in a chair immovable, then quietly going to the office, paid his bill, gave up the rooms, and removed to other quarters where her absence would excite no comment, and there awaited the letter she had promised to write. No one suspected his anguish, and no one ever knew one word of the cruel affair.

A few weeks later the expected letter came, it having been sent to his New York address, and there remailed to Chicago, where it finally reached him. Then he knew the worst and gave her up. Brokenhearted, unfitted for business, or to return home and have his humiliation made known, he went on to Mexico as previously arranged, where he remained two years.

In the meantime rumors reached his friends at home that Mrs. Bryan had died during their travels. Naturally enough they accepted the rumor, wrote him letters of condolence and sympathy, and for a time spoke of her regretfully. "Poor dear Mrs. Bryan, what a pity! So young—so charming; and to have

died 'way off there in Mexico." Then she was forgotten.

When Mr. Bryan returned, so changed and saddened, people felt disinclined to mention the subject of his affliction, and whenever one did so, he begged to be excused from speaking of the sad affair; and there the matter ended.

Years passed, and not one word had he heard from Gertrude. She had completely dropped out of his life, until the morning when little Helena Channing came to him, bringing the jewel case, and her mother's letter. He had never ceased to love Gertrude, and her unexpected death was a severe blow. Again he lived through the past, thinking it all over in detail, quite forgetting the child so anxiously awaiting his return.

"My God!" he cried. "Can it be true? Even to this day it seems at times as if it were a horrible dream. O Gertrude, my lost love! is this indeed the end—the bitter end? Well," he mused, "I've always been charitable towards her, and now I'm thankful that I've been so. Often I've thought that perhaps I was unsuited to her; I was neither young nor handsome—*he* was both. But I fear she learned that youth and good looks are not everything to be desired. Poor girl, she brought desolation to herself as well as to me."

Suddenly he remembered the child entrusted to his care—the poor little innocent girl, whose destiny depended on his decision concerning her.

"Robert Channing's child," he muttered. "The man, who like a thief, robbed me of all earth held dear."

For a moment a bitter feeling of resentment possessed him. "What would the world think?" he questioned. "How could I escape its ridicule; what explanation could I ever make that would not be humiliating? There is nothing that would excuse me for adopting the child of an unfaithful wife, no matter how she might have been influenced by the villain who betrayed her. I cannot do it. It is impossible."

Again he opened Gertrude's letter and read: "Try, Sidney, to forget that she is my child—or his. Only think of her as a poor friendless orphan. . . . When I think of your past kindness, I am sure you will not disregard my last request."

"What a monstrous proposition," he exclaimed vehemently; "and it is her last request! O Gertrude! Gertrude! remorse must have turned your brain or you would never have asked me to do this. Have I not suffered enough already? Are you not satisfied with ruining my life that you should thrust this unwelcome task upon me, only to be an aggravation to my grief? O Gertrude! why did you leave me?"

For the first time since his wife deserted him Mr. Bryan broke down, and for a few moments his great sorrow overcame him. But had those tears been shed long ago, they would have relieved his heavy heart of much of its burden, and brought him a resignation that he could not cultivate.

He had often thought of his wife and of the possibility of sometime hearing from her, and had decided that if she were in want and appealed to him, her appeal would not be in vain. But he had not expected a letter from the grave, nor an appeal for protection to the offspring of her betrayer. For Channing he

had a bitter hatred, intensified as the years passed and as he found excuses for his wife's infatuation for him. He might have forgiven her, but it would have been a dangerous thing for Channing to have crossed his path. He would have done anything for Gertrude, and ignored the criticism of his friends had it been for herself alone; but the thought of taking Robert Channing's child into his home was galling. And yet he wavered.

"What would the world think?" he again muttered, "were I to adopt her and her parentage ever became known? I cannot decide so soon," he thought; "I must consider the matter. In the meantime she shall be cared for; I'd do that much for a stray dog or cat."

Helena's anxious little face brightened when he re-entered the room; but it would have been more anxious had she known of the bitter memories she had resurrected, and how her fate hung in the balance. As he sat down she handed him the other letter—the one addressed to herself. After carefully reading it through he asked how she had found him, and why she had come to him so long before the time arranged.

His manner inspired her with confidence, and in her own quaint way she told him her story, beginning with her mother's death. She explained Mr. Marvin's refusing to take her; her life at Mrs. Hopdyke's, and her running away; her meeting with the book agent, and his taking her to his home; and finally how Mrs. Ruden's curiosity to know the contents of the jewel case had resulted in her being sent to him.

Mr. Bryan asked many questions, to which he received straightforward, intelligent answers. Her story

had been pathetic as well as amusing, and several times he had said: "poor child." She even told him of her adventure with "Moll de rat," and how she was befriended and kept out of a place worse than jail by "Mikey de chump."

Mr. Bryan was horrified on learning to what dangers she had been exposed; and when she related her imprisonment in Trinity Church, and how she had asked the Lord to make him come back from Philadelphia that day, he turned his face aside that she might not see his emotion.

"You liked my mamma very much, didn't you?" she asked innocently.

"Yes; very much."

"I hope you'll like me too, and let me live with you. I—I haven't any other friend, nor any other place to live."

She paused, looked at him wistfully, then resumed: "Mamma wanted me to live with you, I know; but when she wrote the letter she didn't want me to come so soon, for fear I would bother you. But Mrs. Ruden said it was a 'fatality,' and that I'd have to come now; but I'll try not to bother you any."

"I hardly think, little girl, that you would be content to live with an old man like me," said Mr. Bryan, "I have no little girls or boys for you to play with. You would be quite alone, and rather lonely, I fear."

"O no, sir! I wouldn't mind not having anyone to play with. I never played with any little girls in my life, and only with one boy. I always stayed home with mamma, and no little girls ever came to our house, so I wouldn't mind being alone, and—and ——"

"Well, what is it? Don't be afraid to speak out," he said kindly.

"I wanted to tell you," she began hesitatingly, "that mamma came to me last night, and told me that you would take me—and, that I would learn to love you very dearly, and——"

"What are you telling me, child?" he interrupted quickly.

"About mamma coming to me," she replied. "It was in the night when I was in the church; but I suppose it was a dream, because when I woke up I found I'd been asleep."

"What else did she tell you?" he asked with as much interest as if he thought it all real.

"She said she had tried to come to you, but she couldn't make you see her, nor hear her, so she wanted me to tell you that——"

"That what?" he asked eagerly.

"That's all I can tell, Mr. Bryan," said the child regretfully. "When mamma got that far she stopped, and turned into a cloud, and in a minute she was all gone."

Mr. Bryan gazed searchingly into her earnest, truthful face a moment, then summoning a clerk, gave some directions for the day, after which he left the office with Helena, and proceeded to his home in West Fifty-seventh Street.

The splendor there bewildered her. Never had she imagined anything so beautiful. The rich carpets and rugs, the furniture and paintings were to her a marvel. Taking her directly to the library—his favorite retreat—Mr. Bryan summoned his housekeeper, and ac-

quainted her with the fact that Helena would, for a time at least, become a member of the household.

Mrs. Winter was not at all pleased—as her expression clearly showed. Mr. Bryan explained that the child was the orphan of a very dear friend of his, and that he proposed to look after her.

Mrs. Winter remarked that the unexpected advent of a child into the family would greatly increase her cares, and that she had not anticipated anything of the kind when she engaged to come.

Helena, always quick of comprehension and extremely sensitive, flushed with embarrassment, but in an eager tone she exclaimed:

"Please don't think I'll make you any extra work, for I can help a lot. I'll wash all the dishes, and peel the potatoes, and run errands; and when all the work is done I'll knit your stockings."

Mr. Bryan smiled, evidently amused; but Mrs. Winter looked upon her with contempt, and her manner plainly indicated that Mr. Bryan's "very dear friend" must have been an exceedingly poor, and plebeian individual.

After luncheon Mr. Bryan returned to his office, having handed his little charge over to the tender mercies of the housekeeper, with the request that she make her as comfortable as possible.

Helena's first day in her new home dragged wearily enough. After admiring the different articles of furniture she wandered aimlessly about the drawing-room, scarcely daring to breathe, much less touch anything or ask any questions; for Mrs. Winter—looking more wintry than her name—continually appeared with disapproval in her eyes. "Mind you don't meddle

with things," she kept saying; for if I catch you at it, you'll have to go into the kitchen." Once the child ventured to the library, and stood admiring the handsomely bound volumes, when Mrs. Winter suddenly surprised her.

"Please may I take one of the books and see if I can find some pictures?" she asked.

"No, you may not!" was the sharp answer. "You're not even to touch the books, or anything else; and if you want to live here, you must learn to leave things alone."

"I haven't touched anything yet," returned Helena, "and I didn't intend to, either; I only asked if I might."

"Well, just you put your hands behind your back, and keep them there while you're in this room, and then you won't forget."

Rather than stand long in that position, the child soon returned to the drawing-room, where all the long afternoon she stood by the window looking into the street, feeling lonely and unwelcome. She little suspected that twelve years before, her mother had reigned supreme in that house, where she scarcely dared to tread. At an early hour Mrs. Winter gave her a light supper, then she was assigned to a back hall room on the third floor, almost destitute of furniture, it having been used principally for storage.

"Please may I wait up till Mr. Bryan comes?" she asked imploringly.

"No, you may not! Little girls should go to bed early."

"But," protested Helena, "I've always sat up late, and ——"

"It's quite evident that you have not been properly reared," interrupted Mrs. Winter. "But a new leaf's going to be turned. Besides, Mr. Bryan will not want to be bothered with you. He takes a late dinner, and then wants to be alone."

So Helena was sent to bed a very disappointed little girl. But ere long she nestled closer under the bedclothes; her eyes closed, and a smile rested on her lips as she softly whispered; "Dear mamma, dear Billy," and then her disappointment was forgotten.

Mr. Bryan was not surprised because of the child's absence that evening, knowing her to be tired out after her adventures; but the second night he felt disappointed in not seeing her, and the third night, as she was still invisible, he summoned Mrs. Winter and inquired for her.

"She's in bed and asleep, sir," was the prompt reply."

"Does she go to bed so early every night of her own accord?" he asked.

The woman hesitated, not daring to say "yes," for fear of being betrayed later on.

"Well, not exactly of her own accord," she replied; "but I don't believe in children's sitting up late."

"Well, be kind enough to see that she is up tomorrow evening when I come home," he returned briefly.

The next evening on ascending the steps, he saw an eager little face watching from the window, and a moment later, before he could insert his key in the latch, the door was opened from the inside, and a little hand was joyously thrust into his own.

"I'm so glad!" the child exclaimed. "I most thought I'd never see you again."

With her hand still in his he proceeded to the library, and taking her on his knee, said:

"Now tell me, Helena, where you have kept yourself all this time. You have been here four days, and this is the first glimpse I've had of you since the day you came."

Instinctively the child looked toward the door which stood ajar, then in a low voice said:

"Mrs. Winter makes me go to bed before dark, and she won't let me come down in the morning until after you are gone."

Mr. Bryan made no reply, and the child resumed: "She says it's because you don't want me around for fear I'd bother you, but I wouldn't. I'd be very good if she would only let me stay up."

Mr. Bryan smiled at her earnestness, and somewhat encouraged, she continued confidentially: "I guess she don't want me to see you, for she acted mad because I said I liked you, and I hoped you'd let me stay."

"What did she say?" Mr. Bryan asked.

"O, she didn't say much—she only looked it. And," she added sagely, "I guess she don't want you to like me either, for fear you'll let me live here. I wonder why she don't want me—there's lots and lots of room."

"You shall have dinner with me to-night," said Mr. Bryan pleasantly, "and sit up until you are sleepy. Will that please you?"

"O yes, sir," and she clapped her little hands gleefully.

To the servants in attendance during the dinner, Helena was something of a mystery. Through the housekeeper they had heard of her associations with dish-washing, potato peeling, and the like; and how a child brought up in that sphere could conduct herself so gracefully at the table, was more than they could account for.

"She hacts like she b'longed to the quality," said Thomas, the English butler, to Kate, an upstairs girl. "She 'andles 'er knife an' fork an' spoon, like the best of 'em, an' uses 'er napkin like she'd halways been used to one; but I'm blest if I know where she got onto it all, if 'er mother done scrubbin'.'

Thomas, the old butler, had been in the Bryan establishment for fifteen years, and many a time had waited upon Helena's mother. But Gertrude's secret was safe—never had Robert Channing's name been associated with her.

Although Helena felt timid in Mrs. Winter's presence, she did not feel in the least so with Mr. Bryan, and for the first time since her advent into the house she felt free from constraint. After dinner she was permitted to sit and chatter to him until her lids grew heavy.

"Now, little one," he said, "you had better say 'good night;' but you may get up as early as you like, and take breakfast with me."

"I'm so glad you like me!" she exclaimed impulsively; then putting up her lips to be kissed, she added: "Mamma always kissed me 'good night,' but nobody has kissed me since she died, except Mrs. Marvin. But you'll kiss me; won't you?"

He returned the child's caress with a fatherly air, then inquired where she slept.

"Way up stairs," she answered.

"Have you a pretty room?" he asked.

She hesitated, not wishing to complain, and scarcely knowing how to frame her answer.

"It's pretty enough," she returned after a moment's meditation; "but of course it's not as pretty as Mrs. Winter's room, or Kate's, or Maggie's.

Mr. Bryan rose, determined to see for himself, and taking her hand followed her up three flights, to her little cheerless room. A bed had been improvised by placing a mattress across two trunks, a wash bowl stood on a chair, the only one in the room. Mr. Bryan's face showed severe displeasure.

"She probably did not think I would take particular interest in the child," he thought, "and did not suspect that I would ever know of her treatment; but this state of things will never do. How any woman can treat a motherless child like this, is more than I can understand. She's the kind of person who would heartlessly turn her cat and dog out of doors, or consign them to a damp cellar, then retire to her own warm bed with (possibly) thanks to the Creator on her lips for what He had done for *her*, but entirely indifferent to the suffering *she* may have inflicted on others. There are too many 'Mrs. Winters' in the world, selfish and cruel; who go to church with a sanctity in their very walk, expressive of their piety, to 'praise God from whom all blessings flow,' yet return home entirely unconscious of any obligation to extend a part of the blessings they receive to the poor creatures who may be in their power; and with no

thought, perhaps, that their dependent position should call for sympathy and kindness. Such people, Ruskin says, 'lack imagination.' They also lack sentiment and fine-feeling. And Burns' 'man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn,' would have been an inexpressive thought if we would only do unto others as we would be done by."

Little Helena had that night found her way irrevocably to Mr. Bryan's kind and generous heart.

"My poor Gertrude's child," he mused while descending the stairs. "To think of her being left like this. She should have been my child, but fate decreed otherwise. But from this hour she shall be provided for as if she were my own, regardless of what the world would think even though the world ever knew."

CHAPTER XII.

RETURNING to the library Mr. Bryan summoned his housekeeper. That shrewd woman quickly detected his displeasure, rightly surmised the cause, and at once was on the defensive.

"I hope nothing is wrong, sir," she began humbly. "I gave special orders for the dinner, and——"

"The dinner was all right, Mrs. Winter; that is not what I wish to speak about."

"I'm sure I hope everything else is all right too; but really sir, I'm so nervous since that child came, that I'm hardly accountable for what I do, or what I don't do. You see, sir, I'm not accustomed to chil-

dren, and—well, they're very annoying, to say the least."

"In what way has Helena annoyed you, Mrs. Winter?"

"Well, sir, she—er—that is—she's not exactly done anything as yet that I can name; but I'm in constant fear that she will, so it amounts to the same. Of course, sir," she proceeded with growing vehemence, "I'm held responsible for everything; but never, since I was in charge of this house has anything gone wrong, which I'm happy to say, but which is more than I can promise for the future with a strange child around. Why, sir, every time she goes into the drawing-room I'm that nervous I can hardly stand, for fear she'll upset something, or turn things topsy-turvy; and whenever she comes in here, I'm on guard every minute for fear she 'll handle your books. Why, sir, almost the first thing she done when she came here was to ask if she could look 'em over to see if she could find some pictures. But you may believe me, sir, I didn't even let her touch 'em. So you see, sir, that with watching her all day long, it's no wonder that I'm upset and half distracted, and that the house and the dinner all goes to sixes and sevens; for I do assure you, sir, she's a great responsibility."

"I think, Mrs. Winter, that you borrow a great deal of unnecessary trouble," said Mr. Bryan dryly, as soon as the woman gave him an opportunity to speak. "Helena seems to me to be quite a little lady, and——"

"She's only nine, sir; she told me so herself."

"In years, yes; but she's twice that age in experience and good sense. Now, Mrs. Winter, I wish to

consult with you concerning her wardrobe. She was sent to me without an extra stitch of clothing, and I wish you would see at once that she has some new dresses, and in fact everything needful."

An angry light came to the woman's eyes. "Really, Mr. Bryan," she said, "I don't see how, with all my other cares I can superintend the outfit of a wholly destitute child. She'll require a great many things, sir, and a great deal of sewing, and making, and—of course——"

"There are many dressmakers and seamstresses in town," he interrupted with visible impatience, "who would gladly do all that Helena will require to have done; and if you find her such an extra care, get another servant especially for her. I can say no more."

Mrs. Winter felt spiteful, and could not refrain from muttering something about "an extra servant just to wait upon a scrubwoman's child." But she quickly saw her mistake. Mr. Bryan grew pale with anger.

"What do you mean?" he demanded. "Who has dared to insinuate that her mother was a scrubwoman?"

The housekeeper was thoroughly frightened. Never before had she seen Mr. Bryan so angry; and for the first time she feared her month's notice.

"I'm sure I meant no harm, sir," she began very humbly; "but the child herself said she had been brought up to help scrub and——"

"You are wrongly impressed, Mrs. Winter. Since Helena's mother died she has lived with a farmer's wife, who made her do drudgery of a kind quite unfitted to her. But her parents were old friends of

mine, and henceforth she shall live here; and I want her to be looked upon and treated as though she were my own daughter. That reminds me; I am greatly surprised at the room you have given her. She may sleep there to-night, but to-morrow there must be a decided change."

The following day being Saturday, Mr. Bryan returned home early, and devoted the afternoon to entertaining his little charge, whom he found very original and amusing, and with decided opinions and preferences of her own. On being asked which of the unoccupied rooms in the house she considered the prettiest and would prefer for her own, she promptly replied: "The one all furnished in pale blue and pink."

Mr. Bryan looked grave. The room in pale blue and pink was Gertrude's, and had remained undisturbed since she left it twelve years before.

"But why should it longer remain unused?" he thought. "Who has a better right to occupy it than her own child?"

So Helena left her little bed on the trunks and was assigned to the pleasantest room in the house—the one in which her mother had struggled with her better self, and finally resolved to go with her husband to Mexico, and not to see Bob Channing again.

Mrs. Winter was disgusted at the change; the other servants amazed. Even old Thomas, the white-haired butler shook his head, not only disapprovingly but apprehensively. "I wouldn't 'ave believed it," he said solemnly. "To think that 'e'd allow anybody whomsoever to 'ave that room, of hall others, that the deceased Mrs. Bryan 'erself used to hoccupy."

"Mr. Bryan is certainly approaching his dotage," re-

turned Mrs. Winter. "Surely there's no fool like an old fool, and particularly when the old fool is a man, and there's a female in the case, no matter if she is only a stray waif. I wonder," she proceeded indignantly, "what move he'll make next? I expect when she's a little older he'll be giving her the reins entirely, and let her rule the house. Well, there's one thing sure, and that is: she won't ever rule over me—a chit like her, sent here like she dropped down from the skies, or more likely popped up from the lower regions."

During the afternoon Mr. Bryan took Helena to see the animals in Central Park, and her admiration and delight knew no bounds. On being told that she could visit them whenever she liked, it seemed to her that she had been transported into paradise.

"O, if Billy could only come and see them too," she thought, "how happy I'd be."

They went to see the elephants last, and while curiously watching the big clumsy fellows she suddenly exclaimed: "Martha Hopdyke may keep my animal book now. These live animals are a great deal better than her dead ones."

"Did the pictures in your book represent dead animals?" asked Mr. Bryan in surprise.

"No sir, not exactly, that is the pictures didn't mean for the animals to be dead, but—but they were not alive, you know, so they must have been dead."

"A very logical conclusion," was the smiling reply.

"What does a 'logical conclusion' mean? Mr. Bryan?"

"It means, well—in this case you say that the

animals in the book were not alive, so concluded they were dead."

"Was it true then? Were they dead?"

"No, they were live animals."

"Then I don't see," she replied wonderingly, "how——"

"How what?"

"Well, how what I said was a 'logical conclusion!"

"You are like the little boy in the Sunday school," said Mr. Bryan, evidently amused.

"What did he do?" asked Helena.

"He asked a great many questions, the same as you do, and sometimes questions that his teacher could not answer."

"Were you the little boy?"

"O no, not I; it was another little boy."

"What did the teacher do with him?"

"I don't know I'm sure; I left before the Sunday school was out that day."

Helena's enthusiasm over the animals pleased Mr. Bryan very much. He was beginning to think her an exceedingly interesting and lovable little girl, whom he was growing very fond of, and who brightened his home as it had not been brightened since Gertrude deserted him; and he was gradually forgetting that she was Robert Channing's child.

"O Mr. Bryan," she suddenly cried, "do see those beautiful horses coming, all in gold harnesses."

A well appointed victoria was approaching, drawn by two magnificent bays.

"What made those horses have such short tails?" she asked wonderingly as the victoria passed by.

"Because they have been cut off—docked, they call it."

"Didn't it hurt them?"

"Yes, child; it hurt them cruelly."

"Then what made the man do it?"

"Because he's a cruel man—a man who, to gratify his own selfish vanity would subject his faithful animals to untold torture."

For a time they walked on in silence, when suddenly Helena asked: "Mr. Bryan, will that man go to Heaven?"

"What man, Helena?"

"The one who cuts his horses' tails off."

"I cannot answer that question, child. But what do you think about it?"

"I hope he won't go to the other place," she replied thoughtfully, "but I don't think he deserves to go to Heaven half as much as his poor horses do; and I do wish the Lord would make him suffer—not forever and ever, you know, but for a little while—just as much as he made the horses suffer."

That evening Mr. Bryan asked Helena how she would like to be his little girl and live with him always.

I'd like it more than I could tell!" she exclaimed joyfully. "I've wished ever so many times I could, and I know poor mamma would like me to."

"And how would you like to be called Helena Bryan—as though you were really my own little girl?"

She hesitated a moment, evidently considering the matter, then thoughtfully replied: "If you want me to be, then I'd like it, I'm sure. And," she added sud-

denly, "if I'm Helena Bryan, you will be my papa won't you? and I must call you so, mustn't I?"

"Would you like to?"

"O yes, sir! It would be so nice to have a papa like other little girls. I've always wished I had one. But I never want another mamma. Mine is waiting for me up in Heaven—she said so—and when I die I'm to go to her."

After a moment's pause she added earnestly: "I'm so glad Mrs. Winter isn't your wife. When I first came I thought she was because she was all dressed up so nice, and acted so—so bossish-like; but somehow I couldn't call her mamma, very well.

Ere long the child climbed upon his knee, and putting her face affectionately against his, said: "I'm so glad you're to be my papa; and I hope mamma knows, because she'll be glad too."

"Why do you think so?"

"O because—I know so. Mamma was so worried about me that she cried a great deal. She didn't know where I would stay after she died, till Mrs. Marvin promised to take me; but Mr. Marvin wasn't as nice as Mrs. Marvin was, and he wouldn't let me stay."

"Did your mother suffer very much? Was she long ill?"

"Yes, sir, most ever since I can remember; and she always coughed so much, and then she'd sigh, and seem to feel so bad!"

"Was your home comfortable and pretty?"

"Yes, sir! We had a nice house, and lovely things in it. Of course it wasn't near, no, not near so large as this; nor so nice either; but it was a great deal

nicer than Mrs. Hopdyke's, or Mrs. Ruden's, and most as nice as Mrs. Marvin's."

"Helena" (the man's voice was very low), "did your mother ever speak of me?"

"Not until the night she died. Then she did."

"What did she say?"

"O, not very much. She just talked in her sleep, and called you 'dear Sidney.'"

"Is that all she said?"

"O no, sir. She said a great many things, but not about you. But she made me promise to do what her letter said when I was fifteen years old, and to bring her other letter to you and not let anybody else read it. Then she woke up in the night and grabbed my arm, and made me promise not to listen to what the folks said about her."

"What did they say?"

"O, I don't know exactly. They—that is a boy told me the women folks talked about mamma because they were jealous of her because she had better clothes than they had, and because she talked nicer and used bigger words. Then some of them called mamma bad names because she used to wear pink silk stockings, and had a beautiful cloak all lined with lavender colored satin, and trimmed in white fur, and a lovely fan, and—lots of other nice things that they didn't have."

"Where did your mother get them?"

"I don't know. She never got them since I can remember, and she never wore them either. She always kept them upstairs in a big black chest, but sometimes she'd look at them and then she'd cry."

Mr. Bryan sighed, and rising walked across the

room. He well remembered that cloak and fan. He remembered, too, how charming Gertrude had looked in her fairy-like slippers, and pink stockings. He had encouraged her to wear them, and evenings when at home, to please him, she always had. "And for this," he thought, "she has been slandered, and condemned, by a parcel of ignorant, narrow-minded busybodies."

It seemed perfectly natural for Helena to call Mr. Bryan "papa," and with her good night kiss she addressed him by his new name as easily as though accustomed to it all her life.

The next day she went boldly into the library, and taking a book from the case, began carefully turning the leaves. Mrs. Winter, ever on the alert, soon appeared and very sharply bade her put it down.

"It's my papa's book," she returned calmly, "and he said I might look at them whenever I wanted to."

Mrs. Winter stood aghast. "Your papa's?" she repeated in withering tones. "And pray how long since he became your papa?"

"Since last night," was the prompt reply.

"Well, it seems to me, miss, you've forgotten your real father rather soon."

"I never had any real father," said Helena.

"Don't tell a lie," exclaimed the woman angrily. "Of course you had a father. How did you come to exist without?"

"I don't know as I did 'come to exist,'" returned the child stoutly; "but I know I never had a father, because he died years and years before I was born."

"Who told you that?"

"Nobody told me; but he must have, for mamma had forgotten all about him—it had been so long."

"How do you know she had?"

"Because she never told me about him, and she never mentioned him at all, and she would if she hadn't forgotten him."

"A great reasoner you are! How old are you?"

'I'm a quarter to ten."

"You're what?"

"A quarter to ten."

"What are you anyway—a clock?"

Helena laughed. "Miss Nancy once said I was like a clock, because I had such a round face, and had two hands that could keep time. But Miss Nancy was queer, and didn't know much."

"I suppose you mean to insinuate that I'm queer and don't know much either," said Mrs. Winter.

"O no, I didn't. I don't know what insinuate means. I never insinuated in my life, but I can count, and tell the time by a clock."

"Well, what do you mean by saying you're a quarter to ten?"

"I mean that I lack three months of being ten years old, and there are twelve months in a year, and three is a quarter of twelve, so I lack just a quarter of a year to being ten."

"Well, who ever heard of such a droll way of expressing one's self? What a queer child you are. Who did you get your queer ways from?"

"I didn't get them from anybody; I haven't got queer ways. Miss Nancy had—everybody said so; and Tom Marshall and Ned Perkins used to hoot at her, and call her 'Crazy Nance,' and throw stones at her door and then run. But I'm not one bit like her."

"Who was this Miss Nancy you talk about so much?"

"She's a woman that goes around scrubbing, and washing, and ironing, and she baked for us besides."

"I thought your mother done her own scrubbing, and you helped her."

"Well, she didn't. We hadn't much to scrub, for every room was carpeted except the kitchen, and that had an oil cloth on it, and Miss Nancy mopped that."

"She what?"

"Mopped it. Don't you know what that means? Take a long stick like a broom handle, and fasten some rags on one end, and that's a mop; then swish it around in a pail of water and rub it over the floor, and that's mopping."

Mrs. Winter drew the line at mopping. Nothing but scrubbing brushes and household sponges were consistent with her ideas of domestic propriety.

"You've been highly educated, I must say," she said to Helena, in a contemptuous tone, "and very select associates you've had if this 'Miss Nancy queer,' is a sample of them. No wonder your list of accomplishments is out of the usual order. And this," she muttered, "is the child who is to call Mr. Bryan 'papa'; a child who knows more about a mop than she does a piano, and everything else in accordance. Well, there's no accounting for tastes; but I do begin to think that Mr. Bryan is an old tool. I only wish I was sure of another place as good as this, and I'd give him notice and leave mighty sudden. But places like this ain't to be got every day—no boss over me, plenty of servants to do the work, and I with nothing to do but give orders, and get big wages for it. Yes, the place is the

best and the easiest I ever had, and I guess I'll hang on to it; but I've taken such a dislike to that child that I'd just like to leave out of spite."

A few evenings afterward Mr. Bryan sat in the library reading his paper. Helena, who considered him her only friend and clung to him accordingly with childish affection, sat on an ottoman near by, her face very earnest and thoughtful. At last when Mr. Bryan laid the paper aside, she abruptly asked: "Papa, who is Gertrude?"

Mr. Bryan was startled. "Gertrude—what do you mean, child? what Gertrude?"

"I was fixing up my room to-day," she explained, "and in a drawer I found a beautiful book, all in blue and gold letters, and the name in it was 'Gertrude.'"

Mr. Bryan looked relieved. "The book belonged to Mrs. Bryan, my wife," he said. "Her name was Gertrude."

"The same as my mamma's. Did she know my mamma too?"

"Yes, child, we both knew her."

"I'm very sorry Mrs. Bryan is dead," said Helena. "I most know I would love her, because—well, because she had my mamma's name, and because she was your wife. She wasn't one bit like Mrs. Winter, was she?"

"No; not in the least."

"If she was here now, do you suppose she would like me, and let me stay?"

"Yes; I'm very sure she would."

"Have you any picture of her? Because if you have I'd like to see it. Maybe she looked like mamma, seeing their names were alike."

"Helena," said Mr. Bryan, "come to me, and listen to what I tell you." The child left the ottoman and stepped to his side. "I loved my wife very dearly," he proceeded, "but she is dead, and it pains me to speak of her; and I want to request that you never again ask me any questions concerning her. In fact, Helena, I wish you would never speak of her again, in any way whatever. Will you promise to heed me in this, little one?"

"Yes, papa. I'll promise to do anything you want me to, and not to do anything you don't want me to."

"You're a good child," he said, stroking her dark curly hair; "and I'm very glad you came to me. You are no trouble at all, but a little sunbeam instead."

Well pleased with his approbation she impulsively threw her arms around his neck, and giving him a good hug, said: "I'm going to stay with you and do everything you want me to till I'm a young lady, and then I must go back to Billy."

"And who is Billy, pray?"

"O—he's a boy I know."

"So I suppose; I've no idea he's a girl. But who is he?

"He's Billy Marvin, and he lives in Clydesville."

"Why must you go back to him?"

The child hesitated, her face growing very serious, but at last she replied: "I must go back to Billy because I'm his wife."

"His what?"

"His wife, papa. Billy and I are married, and I

promised him I'd come back when I got old enough; so I must go."

"How old is this Billy?" asked Mr. Bryan somewhat anxiously.

"He's just three years older than me; that makes him twelve."

"You should say 'older than I,' instead of 'older than me,'" suggested Mr. Bryan. "I think," he resumed, "you'll need to go to school a while, and learn better grammar, before you talk of being married, and going back to live with that freckle-faced youngster,"

"Billy isn't a 'youngster,' papa, and he hasn't a single freckle," she returned quickly. "He's the handsomest boy I ever saw and the smartest, and the best; and he knows grammar, and everything else. He got the prize for knowing the most of any scholar in school."

"And so you intend to leave me for that boy, as soon as you grow up? Is that it?"

"I don't want to leave you, papa," she said thoughtfully, "for I love you very much; but I love Billy, too, and he loves me; and I promised. So I suppose when I'm big enough I must go and live with him like other married ladies do. But," she added naively, "Billy and I can come back and live here, and then I can be with you both."

Mr. Bryan leaned back and laughed aloud, but observing the child's serious expression—an expression belonging to a face far older than hers—his own became thoughtful. Possibly there was more to this affair than he knew; it might be well to ascertain the facts, then act as the case demanded.

CHAPTER XIII.

HAVING resolved that any childish nonsense of a matrimonial nature existing between Helena and Billy Marvin must be at once ended, Mr. Bryan took her on his knee, and in a kindly tone said: "Now tell me, Helena, what all this means; how, and when were you and Billy married?"

Willingly enough she told him of all Billy's kindness to her, and how sorry he had felt when his father refused to admit her to his home. Then she told him of the ceremony that moonlight night beside her mother's grave. Her story was narrated so ingeniously, and in so earnest a manner, as to surprise her listener into momentary silence.

Presently however speaking very firmly, he said: "Helena, you are only a little girl, and Billy is a mere boy. Neither of you understand anything about marriage, and that ceremony was nothing but child's play; so you must forget all about it, and never refer to it again."

"O no, papa!" she cried earnestly. "It wasn't play at all! We were in real earnest. I meant it, and Billy meant it too; and we did just like John Bolton and Anna Willis did when they were married. And when we got done being married we both said: 'May God bless this union, Amen.'"

"So you performed the ceremony yourselves?"

"Yes, sir; all alone."

"And do you think you are really married without a minister?"

"O yes, sir. Billy heard his father read in a newspaper that folks could get married in this State without a minister."

Mr. Bryan could not refrain from smiling. In a way it all seemed very ridiculous, and yet, there was a pathetic side to the story. "My child," he said gently, "I am sure that neither you or Billy intended to do anything wrong; but it was wrong nevertheless. Marriage is a sacred thing, and not to be indulged in by little children like you two. Consequently it was only a play marriage, and you are no more Billy's wife than I am."

"But papa," she returned imploringly, "my mamma knew all about it; she told me so when she came to me that night in the church."

"What did she tell you?"

"She said she was with Billy and me when we were married, and when I told her that sometime I was going back to him she only smiled, and that shows that she didn't care; don't it, papa?"

"That was only a dream, Helena. She did not really come to you. Your mother would never sanction such an act as that between Billy and you. Now, my dear, I want you, like an obedient little girl, to drop all this nonsense and never speak of being his wife again. In fact, you must never speak of Billy again, nor even think of him. Will you promise me this."

For answer she burst into tears—not wilful angry tears, but those of heartfelt grief, at the ending of this, the greatest of all her hopes.

"I do not wish to hurt your feelings," said Mr. Bryan soothingly, "but I am a better judge than you

and certainly know what is best. Now, don't cry, little one; let me wipe away your tears, then promise me you will do as I wish. Will you, Helena?"

"Yes—papa," she sobbed. "I—I'll promise."

"You're a dear little girl," he said approvingly, "and to-morrow Kate or Maggie shall take you over to the Park for the whole afternoon. If you like you may go every day; and Saturday afternoons and Sundays I'll go with you myself."

Helena smiled, but it was only a faint little smile. Those trips to the Park promised a great treat, but she was too steadfast by nature, and too loyal to Billy, to cast him off so easily, even for the magnificent animals in Central Park. In numerous ways Mr. Bryan endeavored to divert her mind by promises of trips here and there, of new dresses, hats and toys. She tried to appear pleased, and grateful, but on going to her room she threw herself on the bed and sobbed piteously.

"O Billy! won't I see you any more?" she cried. "What will you think when I get grown up and don't come back to you? And oh! you'll go then and get married to some other girl, and papa will make me get married to some other boy! O, I'm so sorry. Dear Billy, I'll never love any boy but you—never, never, never!"

It suddenly occurred to her that she was not keeping her promise to Mr. Bryan. Conscientious to a degree, she hurriedly rose, and going down stairs knocked at the library door. On being admitted she went straight to him, and raising her tear-stained face said:

"Papa, I've come to take back one of the promises

I made, for I can't keep it. I tried to keep it but couldn't, so I've come to tell you, for I don't want to tell a wrong story."

"What promise do you wish to take back?" he asked gravely.

"The one about not *thinking* any more about Billy. I promised not to mention Gertrude again, and that one I'll keep; and I promised never to speak of Billy, and that one I'll keep. But I can't help but think about him—he will come in my thoughts, and so I wanted you to know."

Mr. Bryan admired her straightforwardness, and after a moment's meditation said: "Well, in that case, little one, I'll release you from that promise. Go on thinking about Billy as much as you like, only promise that you will never write to him, nor to his mother, or any one in Clydesville, nor speak of him to me, or to any one else, and I shall be satisfied."

To all this she faithfully promised. "Now run back to bed," he added, "and try to dream of Billy."

When alone he muttered: "What a strange fancy for a child of nine. Well, in a year or so, surrounded as she will be by different people and different scenes, she will cease to think of him, and by the time she is grown, she will have forgotten his existence. It's better so, far better; her life is destined to flow in another channel from what it began. Nothing must be permitted to remind her of Clydesville, or of her life while there. She must if possible forget that she was a Channing, and that her poor mother was ostracized by her Clydesville neighbors. What a brute Channing must have been, to have allowed one word to slip that would have injured her. He must

have done so—how else can the scandal be accounted for? But Helena must never know. Still, I fear that in future something may occur to arouse her curiosity and suspicion. Never must she get an inkling of the relations existing between her mother and myself, if I can prevent it. But I suppose when she is older I shall be at my wit's end many a time to answer her questions. She's quick of comprehension, possesses an inquiring mind, and is bound, I fear, to think of many things concerning her mother's broken sentences, the promises exacted of her, and the letter to me. O Gertrude!" he suddenly exclaimed, "if you had been as loyal to me, as your child is to this Billy, I would be the happiest man on earth to-day. I always doubted that you were heartlessly false to me, and now I know you were not. You took the step which led to your destruction—not through unhappiness with me, who tried so hard to make you happy, but—through the influence of a scoundrel who must have hypnotized you; and once in his power you knew that you were lost forever. O my poor Gertrude! had I known the cause of your distress when I proposed our trip to Mexico, how differently I would have acted. You struggled to resist his evil influence but succumbed at last, and went with him, broke my heart, and blasted your life; and now, after all these years, you tear open the wound until it bleeds afresh. *Her child and his!* and I have adopted her! My God! what an irony of fate!"

For a long time Mr. Bryan sat meditating in silence. At last he rose, and going to his desk took from it a photograph, upon which he gazed long and earnestly.

Then with pallid lips and trembling hands he tore it into atoms.

"Farewell my lost love," he sighed. "It is indeed hard to do this, but I do it for your sake, and for your child's. Helena might sometime discover it, recognize you, and in some manner ascertain the truth. So for your sake, and for hers, I part with the dearest treasure I possess."

From another drawer he withdrew the letter Gertrude had enclosed to him in the jewel case, and likewise destroyed that; throwing the fragments, together with those of the photograph, into the grate, then touching them with a lighted match he watched them burn until the last ember had ceased to glow.

"My mind will be relieved now," he muttered; "and if I go away and leave my desk unlocked, as I have frequently done, I shall not be exercised because of Mrs. Winter's prying curiosity. Nothing remains now by which a link can be formed except the knowledge which Mrs. Ruden holds, and that shall be investigated and acted upon without delay."

CHAPTER XIV.

TWELVE years passed. Little Helena Channing, the child of nine who so miraculously found her way into the affections of her mother's wronged husband, against all precedent and custom, could scarcely be recognized in Helena Bryan, of nearly twenty-one, whom wealth and educational advantages had de-

veloped into an exceedingly interesting girl. At nineteen she had graduated from a well-known young ladies' seminary in New York, and at Mr. Bryan's request had taken her place at the head of his house.

Mrs. Winter's old time prejudice had somewhat softened, and her position was not surrendered as reluctantly or as ungraciously as she at one time would have supposed. Particularly when she was made to understand that the home, and the "big wages" as well, would still be hers, and the position too, for that matter. Helena would only be the nominal head; evidently she did not aspire to assuming the real duties of the position. Mrs. Winter, with all her faults, was a thoroughly good housekeeper, and her long experience in managing the house made her an invaluable servant, and Helena therefore was perfectly content to become a mere figurehead, enjoying the distinction without any of its responsibilities.

Years before, when Mr. Bryan and his wife were living happily together—as he supposed—they had during their two seasons of married life been quite important factors in society. She was handsome and attractive; he, generous and fond of entertaining. But when he returned from his Mexican travels, so changed and saddened, his social acquaintances knew him no more. Their world moved on, and he was soon forgotten except by a circle of real friends, who occasionally visited him in a quiet way, and received visits from him in return.

On leaving school, Helena often met with these friends of her adopted father, with whom she soon became very popular, and, owing to his tact, she

was not humiliated by an investigation into her family history. It was supposed that her parents were old friends of Mr. Bryan, whom he had known in his younger days, and no further thought was given to the matter. At one time, years back, when Helena first came to him, Mr. Bryan had feared that the knowledge Mrs. Ruden possessed might in some way lead to the child's identity being disclosed, and eventually to unpleasant discoveries. For the purpose of circumventing anything of the kind he went to Newburg, intending to not only recompense the Rudens for their kindness to the child, but to pledge them to secrecy as well. But on arriving he found they had gone to the far west, to take up government land.

Mr. Bryan felt greatly relieved. Poor and obscure as they were, and so far removed from Helena, no harm could possibly come to her through them. Besides, Mrs. Ruden had not opened the letter addressed to him—of that he was certain, for the seal had not been broken. So her knowledge was very limited after all. She only knew that the child's name was Channing, and that she had been sent to a Mr. Bryan.

Before Helena had long held the reins of government in the Bryan establishment, several of Mr. Bryan's friends suggested the advisability of her becoming a member of society. These suggestions, however, were not received with enthusiasm on her part. She had her few very dear friends, to whom she was always "at home," and very glad of their companionship; but the thought of becoming an active member of society, with all the position would entail, was rather overpowering.

"Father," she exclaimed, "I should be perfectly miserable if I were compelled to devote almost my whole time to thinking and studying what to wear; always trying to appear in something new and original, and outrival all the other girls, and, if I am rightly informed, that's the principal ambition of society women."

"But, Helena——"

"O father, please don't! I'm perfectly content as I am. I have more gowns now than I know what to do with, real pretty ones too, and——"

"Go into society then, and wear them," he said. "Once there you'll soon find out what to do with them."

"You innocent darling," exclaimed the girl laughing. "If I were to enter society with the gowns I possess, I don't think I would remain there long. No one would care to know me, and I would be cut dead."

"I thought you spoke as though your gowns were very nice and pretty?"

"So they are for home use, and for any occasion which my present mode of life demands. But society! Really——"

"Well, Helena, if it is a question of dress—and jewels probably—get more," was his generous reply.

"I know you mean to consult my interests, father, as you have always done; but having just left school, I would like to take up a course of reading for a year or so, and if I ever enter society, I should prefer to be recognized for what I know, more particularly than for what I wear. And," she added smiling, "that is the ambition of the 'new woman,' you know."

Nothing more was said on the subject until Mrs. Herbert Lancaster approached him. Mrs. Lancaster was a kind, motherly woman, well known in inner society circles and an ardent admirer of Helena Bryan. Being an old and valued friend of Mr. Bryan, she began by pleasantly upbraiding him for being such a recluse. He offered the same excuse as of old.

"O nonsense," replied Mrs. Lancaster. "That's no way to show your true appreciation of your wife, or of her memory. No woman now-a-days, expects a man to live like a hermit for the rest of his life after she dies, and you've done so for the past twenty—I I don't know how many years. Now, to my thinking, if a man really wishes to show that he really valued his wife's companionship to such a degree that he cannot be happy alone why—let him get another; the sooner the better. Remaining single, my dear Mr. Bryan, like you are doing, looks as though one matrimonial experience was quite enough, and you dared not attempt it again."

Mrs. Lancaster smiled at her own wit, never suspecting how hard she had hit her friend. But Mr. Bryan good-naturedly retorted:

"You certainly have not practiced what you preach, Mrs. Lancaster, or you would not have remained a widow all these years. Perhaps," he added facetiously, "your advice is good, and it might be well for us both to consider it seriously."

"O Mr. Bryan!" she exclaimed with a coquettish little laugh. "You surely do not think—er—really, we have known each other so many years you know, and are such very good friends—to say nothing of our

being so very ancient. Well, to say the least, the idea is as amusing as it is absurd."

They both laughed heartily, as if it were a good joke. Mr. Bryan had felt very safe in making that little speech. He knew Mrs. Lancaster too well, to fear that she would catch at any bait of a matrimonial nature even from him. She was too fond of the income derived from her landed estates to trust her self, her income, or the said estates to the control or supervision of any man.

"Suppose we change the subject," said Mrs. Lancaster, "and speak seriously for a moment. I called expressly to consult with you about Helena. Your adopted daughter is a charming girl—a brilliant girl; and it's a positive shame for you to exclude her from the world as you do. You are getting old, and the world can do without you very well; but she is young, life is before her, and she should in no way be—be—well, in no way be handicapped. That's probably not a proper word to apply to a young lady—its's a sort of race track phrase, I suppose; but then I think it expresses my meaning."

"Really, my dear Mrs. Lancaster, I assure you Helena is in no way 'handicapped'; she has perfect freedom, and my approval as well, in regard to going into society; but she seems to oppose it."

"Pooh! Helena is a mere girl—just fresh from school; and she doesn't know what is best for her. Pardon the allusion, but she has been reared in such a prim, Quakerish fashion, that's it no wonder if she imagines she'd feel like a stray cat in a garret. But just give her an insight into another life and she'll take to it readily enough. I was a girl once myself—of

course," she added naively, "it was a good many years ago, but not so many but that I remember the time distinctly. Now, Mr. Bryan, I'd like nothing better than introducing, and chaperoning Helena for the coming season; and with your permission, will gladly take her especially under my own charge."

Mrs. Lancaster felt rather elated over her past successes in that line. Through her instrumentality not very long before, Miss Imogene Courtney, a charming young girl of great wealth, had been graciously received into the most exclusive society circles, from which the girl's family had always been excluded, because their pedigree was not considered up to the regulation standard. Through Mrs. Lancaster's influence, however, this younger daughter of the family was welcomed with open arms. But she eventually showed her contempt, or at least her non-appreciation of the favor (?) extended to her, by turning her back on New York society and uniting herself to a titled foreigner, much to the disgust of her father, a shrewd financier, who, having made his millions in America, was sufficiently American, and loyal as well, to prefer that his daughter wed one of her own countrymen. But, on discovering that Miss Imogene had a will on the subject equal to his own, he quietly relented, and sent the pair off with his blessing and a few of his millions besides.

While, as a rule, this too prevalent desire among American heiresses to marry titles is lamentable, there are palliating circumstances, and the one in point may be considered as such, from the fact that the girl's family, while in every way respectable, had been cruelly ignored until some of the European nobility extended

to them a friendly hand. Is it to be wondered at then, or should the girl be censured for seeking redress for the slights to her family by taking herself and her fortune to more friendly shores than her own had been?

Even Mrs. Lancaster would have been more elated, perhaps, had she succeeded in bringing about some brilliant match for her charming young heiress in this country; but with all her influence, all her wealth and social power, she had found, as had the father, that it was out of her province to control the girl's inclinations to that extent.

American society estimates such losses only from a social standpoint, but European families of pedigree, and particularly the one most favored, it is to be regretted, look upon the match in the nature of a brilliant *coup*, as might be made by a lucky member of their ranks at Monte Carlo.

As might be expected, Mrs. Lancaster persuaded Mr. Bryan to exert a positive influence with Helena, which resulted in her "primitive objections"—as Mrs. Lancaster called them—being overruled. Once within the gay swirl of fashionable indulgences, natural instinct inspired her with the desire to not be outdone; and even Mrs. Lancaster could find nothing but praise for her numerous successes. But in her heart, Helena felt that she could not be satisfied to live the life of a devotee of fashion, with all its affectation and outward show, and insincerity and jealousies within.

For two seasons the girl held her own, and with a degree of recklessness plunged into metropolitan amusements and pleasures. But as the second season was drawing to a close, she experienced a feeling of

relief, rather than regret; and welcomed the approach of the Lenten season with its weeks of peaceful quietude.

"I shall soon have a little time to myself," she mused, "in which to read something aside from society news, with its descriptions of Mrs. A's imported gowns, Mrs. V's magnificent diamonds, and Mrs. C's tropical floral display, to say nothing of dances at Sherry's, first night displays at the opera, and receptions *ad libitum*. And to-morrow it's just the same with the scenery slightly shifted. Thank goodness only one more ball! the grand affair of the season, and then a long rest. Won't I enjoy it, though? My vice-like gowns will be laid aside, and I shall be able to draw a full breath. Some features of society are pleasant enough, if one could only be comfortable while enioying them."

CHAPTER XV.

THE "grand affair of the season" was over. Helena returned home earlier than she usually did from such entertainments, and in a strangely thoughtful mood. Mr. Bryan had not retired but sat dozing before the grate in the library.

"Father," she said regretfully, "I hope you have not waited up on my account. I would have come even earlier had I thought you were waiting for me."

She removed her wraps and threw them across a chair, slowly drew off her gloves, and tossed them on

a table; then drawing a chair to the fire sat down. Mr. Bryan asked several commonplace questions about the ball, to which he received brief and mechanical answers; then for a time they sat in silence. At last he rose and said good night. That aroused her.

"Father, before you go," she began hesitatingly, "I wish to know whether you have a photograph or a likeness of any kind of your wife."

Mr. Bryan sat down, or rather sank back into his chair in amazement. Her question had startled him into momentary disquietude. Feigning not to observe it, Helena continued:

"If you have one I should like very much to see it."

"I have no likeness of her of any kind or description," he returned, attempting to speak easily.

"How strange," said the girl. "Surely she must have had them taken?"

"Yes; but I do not think there is one in existence now."

"What has become of them?"

"Lost, I suppose, or destroyed."

She appeared dissatisfied—distrustful. "Father," she said, looking at him very earnestly, "loving her as you did, is it not strange that any likeness you may have had of her should have been destroyed?—and stranger still, when it was the last, and only one? It seems incredible that you destroyed it yourself or that you permitted any one else to do so."

"I know it does," he returned regretfully, "but such is the case nevertheless. But tell me, Helena, what has prompted you all at once to wish to see her likeness?"

"Curiosity, I suppose," she replied frankly enough.

"I was told to-night that I looked like her,—near enough to be her own daughter. In fact, I was taken for such."

A shade passed over Mr. Bryan's face, and his lips compressed; but bravely endeavoring to keep master of the situation, he smilingly replied:

"No wonder, being known as you are as my daughter. The person was some stranger to you, no doubt, who does not know the facts. Who was it, by the way?"

"A gentleman who has recently returned from abroad, where he has resided a number of years. His name is Belaires."

"Belaires?" repeated Mr. Bryan, a whiteness settling about his lips.

"Yes; Mr. Belaires," returned Helena, "a bachelor of some forty years, I should judge. We were introduced, and after dancing together, had quite a long chat, in which he surprised me by saying that when he was a young man he knew my mother very well. 'My mother?' said I, 'when and where pray?' Then he explained that many years ago he had often met her, she being an intimate friend of his sister Helen, now Mrs. Fielding, of Los Angeles, California. Mr. Belaires also said the last time he saw my mother was one vacation when home from college, and the last call he made before returning to college was to see her. I asked where she was living at the time, and he replied in West Fifty-seventh Street, near Fifth Avenue. 'You are speaking of Mrs. Bryan, my father's wife,' I said. Then I informed him of his mistake, and that I was a Bryan only by adoption. At first he appeared incredulous and remarked that

my resemblance to Mrs. Bryan was striking, and that if I were not her own daughter it was a most remarkable coincidence. That is the reason of my eagerness to see her picture."

Mr. Bryan felt somewhat reassured, and laughingly remarked that Mr. Belaires' statement was pure imagination.

"My child," he said," "naturally Mr. Belaires thought you were our own daughter, and then it was easy to imagine that you resembled my wife—your supposed mother."

"But, father, Mr. Belaires insisted that I closely resembled her even after he knew the facts."

"Helena," returned Mr. Bryan in an indulgent voice, "let me tell you a little story—it will illustrate fully my idea of the case. A certain Mrs. Blank called upon a certain Mrs. Pepper, in behalf of a charitable mission. Mrs. Pepper had a mulatto cook, who was a widow with one child—a boy, of perhaps three years. The child possessed so fair a complexion, that a casual observer would never have detected the colored blood in his veins. The boy, Abraham Lincoln Buckley by name, was quite a pet in the Pepper household, and was permitted to wander about wherever he pleased; and it so happened that during Mrs. Blank's call, the child found his way into the parlor. Mrs. Blank quickly spied him as he toddled into the room, and naturally enough took him to be Mrs. Pepper's child. Wishing to make a good impression, and thinking the surest way to appeal to the mother was through the child, she put out both hands to him, saying: 'Come here, my little man, and tell me your name. What a sweet little boy!' she exclaimed, taking him on her

lap and giving him a hearty kiss. 'What a little darling to be sure; so like his papa, too!—a perfect picture of your husband, Mrs. Pepper."

"'Are you acquainted with my husband?' Mrs. Pepper asked smilingly.

"'Well, no; not exactly acquainted perhaps. But I know him very well by sight, and I should have known this lovely little darling was his, had I run across him a thousand miles away.'

"'I think," returned Mrs. Pepper with an ironical smile, 'that your imagination is rather running riot, for I assure you, Mrs. Blank, the child is not my husband's, nor mine; he belongs to my colored cook, and was born before my husband knew of her existence.'

"Mrs. Blank was covered with confusion, and forgetting all about her charitable mission, hastened away. But she obstinately refused to admit that she had been wrong, or that she had spoken of the resemblance merely from policy, and on leaving the door, remarked: 'One often meets with strange things in life, and particularly strange freaks in nature; and this is certainly one of them, for I positively assure you, Mrs. Pepper, that child is a living picture of Mr. Pepper.'

"So it's my opinion, Helena," added Mr. Bryan emphatically, "that Mr. Belaires was in the same boat as was Mrs. Blank, and, having made the assertion, he insisted that he was correct whether or no."

"But father, what about that letter?—the one I brought you from my mother. I was not to know its contents because I was too young, I suppose, to comprehend; but surely, nothing need be withheld longer,

Were my mother here now, she would trust me, I am sure."

"The letter you refer to was destroyed long ago, my child. It was among other papers, and none of them remain."

"What a pity!" exclaimed the girl. "I have been thinking about that letter to-night, and was so very anxious to read it. But father, you remember what it said, do you not?"

"A portion of it, certainly, but not all."

"Will you tell me all you can remember?"

"My child, the letter of course was written almost entirely in your behalf. Your mother stated that she was dying, and leaving you alone and unprovided for; and she requested me for the sake of past friendship to take and care for you. That is the sum and substance of it."

"But, father, if that is all why did she so positively forbid me to read it?—even as a child I might have known all that."

"Your mother was ill and fanciful—perhaps whimsical," he returned, not knowing what else to say.

"And the jewel case, father—you gave that to her, did you not?"

"Yes."

"When did you give it to her?"

"Mr. Bryan was becoming very nervous under her examination, and close scrutiny. But endeavoring to appear perfectly at ease, he answered:

"I gave it to her when she was a mere girl; long before she was married to your father—before she had ever seen him, in fact."

"Do you know where my parents were married?

My mother never told me anything about it, and I know very little concerning them, although I remember all she ever told me."

"Your mother went west—to Chicago, I believe; and they were married out there, somewhere."

"Did she go alone?—Had she no relatives?—Have I none on her side?"

"None that I know of now living. Your mother, like yourself, was an orphan and an only child; consequently on her side you never had an uncle, aunt, or cousin."

"Whom did she live with?"

"An uncle of hers in Philadelphia."

"And—and, father, did you become acquainted with her there?"

"Yes. I often went over to Philadelphia on business in which her uncle was interested, and in that manner became acquainted with her, although at that time she was a mere child."

"Where is the uncle now?—my great uncle he is in fact."

"He died when your mother was but sixteen years old."

"Were you a married man at that time?"

"No."

"What did my mother do after her uncle's death?"

"Well, I looked after her interests partly, and went over to Philadelphia occasionally expressly to see that she was getting along all right."

"And you became fond of her during that time?"

"Yes—I, that is, I was very much interested in her."

"How long after that before she went west?"

"Between two and three years, I believe."

"Were you a married man when she went?"

"O yes," he returned quickly, as though relieved. "I had been married two years or more."

"Father, where did your wife become acquainted with my mother?"

"In Philadelphia. She and I often went there."

"Did my mother ever come here—was she ever in this house?"

Mr. Bryan felt that he stood on the verge of discovery. If Helena once suspected that her mother had been there, she would be sure to question old Thomas, the butler, whom she knew to have been in the household many years. Nor could he enter into collusion with the butler and coach him what to, or what not to say, without arousing his suspicions. And if Helena were to discover that his wife, Gertrude Bryan, also came from Philadelphia and insisted—as she certainly would—on a complete description of her, nothing after that could allay her suspicion of the real facts. He also realized that if she persisted in her present line of questions, a disclosure would soon be inevitable, unless he resorted to out and out falsehood. All this passed rapidly through his mind, but as though endeavoring to recall some past event, he slowly replied:

"If I remember correctly, your mother on leaving Philadelphia prior to going west, came to New York, and started from here, and—let me think—yes, I believe she did call."

Mr. Bryan felt that he had skilfully dissuaded her from consulting with Thomas on the subject; for as a mere caller, she would not even be remembered.

"Whom did my mother go to Chicago to see?" she asked abruptly.

"That I cannot tell you," he replied in a quiet tone. "My wife and I started for Mexico about that time, and I lost all trace of your mother, and never saw her again."

"But, father, tell me, did she not——"

"Helena," he interrupted almost impatiently, "I requested you years ago, not to mention her to me again. Let me repeat that request now. This conversation pains me more than you know."

The girl looked at him searchingly. "Father," she replied, "I do not remember that you ever requested me until now, to not mention *my mother*. But you once did request me never to mention your wife."

"Alas!" he exclaimed with a sigh. "I was thinking of Gertrude Bryan, my wife, and not of Gertrude Channing, your mother."

Helena's expression alarmed him. "I must be growing old and childish," he said with a feeble attempt at gaiety; "but the time was when both Gertrudes were very dear to me, and——" he proceeded guardedly, "I will admit to you that I did love your mother long before I loved my wife."

He suddenly paused, feeling that his explanation was very weak, and not at all acceptable to her. He realized that he was getting into deep water—deeper and deeper every moment.

"Father," continued Helena, "if you loved my mother, why did you not marry her? I am sure she loved you. I have often thought during the last few years that once you did love her, but that she married my father, and, having lost her, you did not marry

until long afterward; but to-night I learn differently, you married first, not she."

Mr. Bryan felt that she had found a clue at last, and he knew not how to evade her questions. Dealing with an unsuspecting child of nine, and with a shrewd girl of nearly twenty-one, whose curiosity—not to say suspicion—was aroused, were quite different matters, and he almost doubted his ability to longer cope with her.

"Will you not tell me?" she asked gently, after waiting in vain for an answer.

"Why, after all these years, Helena, do you ask me these strange questions to-night?" he suddenly demanded.

"Because I love you very dearly," was the earnest reply, "and because I loved my mother very dearly. Is it not natural then—am I not justified in wishing to know everything concerning her—concerning you both? particularly regarding your relations to each other?"

Mr. Bryan remained silent, deeming it the best policy until he had considered what answer to make. He knew that so far, he had blundered; while his manner had aroused rather than dispelled her curiosity. What was running in her mind he did not know, nor did he dare to ask, or show any interest. She was liable the next moment to ask something else unanswerable, and no knowing to what extent her imagination would lead her. Wishing to allay all suspicion of the truth—if any existed in her mind—he made, after a moment's meditation, what he considered a diplomatic move.

"Helena," he said, "let us change the subject for a

moment. Would you miss me very much if I were to go away for a few weeks—possibly a few months?"

She looked at him in astonishment. Never, to her recollection, had he been from home for more than one day at a time unless she had been with him, and she replied: "Certainly I would miss you, father; but when and where are you going?"

"I have been thinking," he returned slowly, "that perhaps a trip would do me good, and—I would like to go to Mexico again; and—I would like to visit my wife's grave. Poor woman, she lies alone, year after year, apparently forgotten."

"I never knew before that she was buried in Mexico," said Helena, interpreting his words just as he had intended she should.

"Did I never tell you about our trip, and about her death?" he asked in a constrained voice.

"No; never a word."

"Well, child, it's late now, and I don't feel like sitting up any longer to-night. In fact, I don't like to speak of it at all. But in the morning if you will ask Thomas, he will tell you anything you wish to know. He was very fond of Mrs. Bryan, and was in our employ when she died. Good night."

He abruptly left the room, glad to escape, and rather flattered himself on having effectually uprooted any growing suspicion which she may have entertained.

"My poor misguided Gertrude!" he mused, "Your child shall never know your sad story. I'll evade it in some manner even if for your sake, and for hers, I am compelled to dissemble and equivocate. And if Helena questions Thomas, he can innocently dissuade

her mind from the real facts—he has nothing to guard, nothing to conceal, and I hope I have succeeded in shifting the task to him."

As for Helena her mind was somewhat confused. For years she had secretly wondered over numerous little things—not much in themselves, but forming important links when added together. She had long known that her real father had not died years and years before her birth, as at one time she firmly believed. She also remembered having heard her mother, the night she died, speak in her dreams of Mr. Bryan as "dear Sidney"; while she had never heard her own father's name mentioned. All this occurred to her with renewed force since Mr. Belaires had commented upon her resemblance to Mrs. Bryan.

The next morning, directly Mr. Bryan had gone down town, Helena approached old Thomas, the butler, and rather surprised him with her abrupt questions.

"Thomas," she began, "do you distinctly remember Mrs. Bryan, my father's wife?"

"Remember 'er, Miss Helena? Well, I should say I do. A kinder lady never lived."

"Do I look like her?"

Thomas gazed at the girl curiously a moment, then shaking his white head, solemnly replied: "No, Miss Helena, not as I can see."

"Are you sure, Thomas? Look at me closely."

"Yes, Miss Helena; I'm certain sure."

"But I was told only last evening that I looked very much like her?"

"Some folks 'ave eyes, and so 'ave needles," re-

turned Thomas in a manner intended to settle the question beyond a doubt.

"Tell me something of her," continued Helena. "Father does not care to speak of her, and I would like to know."

"Well, Miss Helena, there isn't much to tell exceptin' she was as beautiful as she was good an' kind. She an' master lived together like two turtle doves for more 'n two years, then she took kind of sick; not sick exactly, either, but she got nervous, an' thin, an' worried looking. Then master he got more worried than she was, an' soon they started off for Mexico for 'er 'ealth. But I guess the climate didn't agree with 'er, for they'd only been gone a few months when she took sick in earnest, an' died, an' was buried in that 'eathenish country where the people enjoys bull fights. Well, master was hall broke hup, an' 'e stayed away two years an' then came 'ome lookin' as much like a ghost as 'e did like 'imself. That's hall, Miss Helena, that I can tell."

Whatever half-formed ideas had been in Helena's mind were dispelled, just as Mr. Bryan had intended. Her mother, Gertrude Channing, lying in the churchyard in Clydesville, could have no possible connection with Gertrude Bryan, buried in far-away Mexico."

"Mr. Belaires must have imagined the resemblance after all," she thought, "for surely Thomas is a better judge in the matter than he."

Helena's reasoning was astray. A resemblance at first sight is often detected between two persons which will gradually fade by frequent contact. For this reason Mr. Belaires, never having seen Helena, detected it at once.

"I wish I had a photograph of my mother," the girl mused. "How strange there are none in existence. If I only had one I would show it to Mr. Belaires and ask if it were anything like Mrs. Bryan."

It was well for Helena's peace of mind that none could be found; for anxious as she was to unravel the mysterious coincidences of her resemblance to Mrs. Bryan, and Mr. Bryan's fatherly interest in her, she would have been miserable had all the inevitable disclosures been made known.

CHAPTER XVI.

SPRING and summer passed; autumn had arrived. Mr. Bryan and Helena were enjoying an unusually late dinner, while she was relating to him glowing descriptions of life in Newport, where she had been spending a few weeks in Mrs. Lancaster's pretty cottage, and from where she had that day returned.

After dessert was served and the servants had withdrawn, Mr. Bryan said: "Well, my daughter, I am very glad you have had such a pleasant time; glad, in fact, that your girlhood days are ending so happily, with no serious cause for future regrets."

Detecting a sadness in his voice, Helena looked up inquiringly.

"This is the twenty-third of the month," he continued. "Has the date no significance for you, Helena?"

"The twenty-third?" she repeated musingly. "No,

father; I cannot say that it has. Why should it? What ever occurred on that date?"

"Your birth, my dear."

"Yes, I know; but this is September. My birthday is not until October."

"Exactly, on the twenty-third—one month from to-day. You will then be twenty-one, and no longer—legally speaking—will you be an infant."

"Am I spoken of now as one?" she asked laughing.

"Yes, that is the term the courts apply to all persons under age."

"Well, I've been a bouncing infant for a good many years; big enough, and strong enough, to completely squelch that shrunken little lawyer of yours, who dares apply such an undignified name to me. But seriously, father, when I'm of age what are you going to do with me?"

"Do with you? that's not the question. It's what will you do with yourself."

"What is your wish in the matter, father?"

"Well, Helena, a fond father's wishes are usually selfish and unreasonable, I know, and few daughters seriously consider them; but I do hope that you will remain with me as long as I live. I have missed you very much during the last few weeks; and the thought of your marrying some day and leaving me for all time is hardly endurable."

"Do you want me to become an old maid, and remain with you all my life?" she asked laughingly.

"No, not that; but I feel on the subject the same as did one of the world's most brilliant orators when he said: 'I cannot part with my daughter, but I do not object to receiving a son.' A happy sentiment,

Helena, and one which his daughter must have appreciated."

"Well, father dear, I have no wish to leave you—the thought is equally painful to me; and after all your kindness, I could not find it in my heart to do so even were I inclined."

"I only hope you will always feel so. Remember, Helena, you are my only heir; everything I possess, with the exception of some legacies to the servants and a few charitable bequests, will go to you, including this house and all its belongings."

"My dear father," returned the girl feelingly, "I faithfully promise never to leave you. And whoever takes me, must be added to my 'belongings'; or rather, he must come where they are, and not they go to him. Quite favorable conditions, I should think, and," she added smiling, "very much unlike those of a poor girl with a whole family for her husband to support."

"Decidedly," he replied, evidently amused; "and quite unlike bringing the poor fellow to live with that much abused individual—his mother-in-law. But returning to the subject of your twenty-first birthday; what shall we do to celebrate it? Now what would give you the greatest pleasure?"

For several minutes she did not answer, but sat with downcast eyes as though in deep thought.

"Father," she said at last, "if you really will permit me to celebrate the day in a manner more pleasing to me than any other—in fact," she proceeded eagerly, "in a way I have longed for all these years, you will let me take a trip back to Clydesville, to see my dear

old home—the house where my poor mother died—and to visit her grave."

Mr. Bryan made no reply; he was greatly surprised and disappointed at her request. For years she had not spoken of Clydesville, and he had hoped she had forgotten the existence of the place. He wondered if she still remembered the slanderous tongues, and their base insinuations against her mother. The thought of her going back there was very disquieting. He feared familiar scenes would revive old memories, probably long forgotten, and eventually cause the pure impressions she now entertained of her mother to change.

"I wonder what she remembers and what she does not?" he mused. "Let me think; do I remember any of the events which transpired when I was about the age she was when living in Clydesville?"

Throwing his mind back to his childhood, Mr. Bryan remembered spending a few weeks on a farm one summer accompanied by his mother, when he was about ten years old, and he was surprised to find how vividly events of that time recurred to him without any effort to recall them; more vivid, in fact, than events of much more recent date. He well remembered his stately mother, whose kindly face and noble manner won the respect of all who knew her. He even remembered the gown she wore, and her pained expression as well, when he entered her presence one day flushed with excitement, dirt-begrimed, and without coat or hat, and in triumphant tones related the result of a "fight" he had just had with Dick Haskel, a boy residing on an adjoining farm.

"My dear mother was greatly shocked at my be-

havior," Mr. Bryan mused, "but she somewhat relented in her displeasure after hearing the facts of the case, although she suggested that in future I should try moral suasion, instead of resorting to force."

Dick Haskel was noted thoroughout the neighborhood for his many evil propensities, among which was the robbing of birds' nests. He was a bad youngster, cruel by nature, woefully depraved for his years, and not at all susceptible to moral suasion, and Mr. Bryan smiled as he remembered the numerous thrashings he had given young Dick before he would let the nests alone. He also remembered Casper Haskel, Dick's elder brother, another cruel brute, whose own cows ran away at his approach as though expecting a blow or a kick. Casper delighted in shooting birds, particularly bright-colored ones, little caring whether or not they had a nest of young left to die of starvation. Many a time young Bryan wished he were big enough to "lick" him as well as Dick.

He remembered their sister Lucinda, an ignorant, weak-minded girl, vain as a peacock—except when, like the peacock, she looked at her feet—who wore a bright wing in her hat with great pomp, and proudly boasted that it came from a bird which "Cas" had shot.

The instincts of the child often betray the qualities of the mother, and Mrs. Haskel was no exception. She was totally devoid of fine feeling or sentiment, and not only permitted Dick to tease the dog and cat, but allowed him to pull off flies' wings, to put bumble bees in bottles until they died, impale butterflies on pins to see them spread their wings, and commit other acts of cruelty; she also encouraged Casper in his shooting

mania, although she would scream in terror if a gun, loaded or unloaded, were pointed at her.

"No wonder I remember those events of my childhood," Mr. Bryan thought. "My mother was a refined and cultured woman who taught me the moral to live and let live, or at least to not commit or encourage wanton acts of cruelty or destruction; and I often wonder if when men and women go hunting, it ever occurs to them that those beautiful animals and birds which they destroy enjoy life as much as they? How people of any heart can, for mere pastime, hound or shoot them down, and boast of their cruelty, is more than I can understand. And it is a travesty on our public men that one of our Presidents will be more noted in history for the fish he has caught, and the ducks he has bagged than for his acts of statesmanship."

Mr. Bryan moved as though suddenly awakening from a dream. "Helena," he said, "have you any birds' wings, or birds in any of your bonnets?"

The girl looked at him a moment wonderingly, as though at a loss to understand his apparently irrelevant question, then demurely replied: "No, father; but perhaps there's a bee in one of them."

"I wouldn't be surprised," he retorted. "But have you any birds?"

"No; nothing except plumes and tips. But why do you ask, father?"

"Because," he returned earnestly, "I never want to see you wear them." In explanation he told her the story of the Haskels, and the impressions his young mind had received.

"And is that what you have been thinking about?" asked Helena, laughing. "Why, I thought you were

deciding whether or not to consent to my going to Clydesville. I wondered what there was so momentous about it that it took you so long to make up your mind, but it seems you were not thinking of me or of my request at all, but of those wicked Haskel boys instead."

"Rather rude and absent-minded of me, I admit," said Mr. Bryan, "but we cannot always control our thoughts, you know; they will at times wander, and mine for some reason wandered to my boyhood, and that train of thought led me on until I quite forgot that you were waiting for an answer."

"I'll forgive you," said Helena, indulgently, "if you will ——"

"If our society women would only take the matter up," interrupted Mr. Bryan, "and refuse to wear birds, the custom would soon become unfashionable. Do you know, Helena, there are thousands upon thousands of song birds slaughtered every year to gratify this feminine vanity?"

"And the destruction will continue," returned Helena, "until our society leaders and fashionable women agree to stop it by refusing to buy them. They have only to decree a thing and set the ball rolling, as it were, and the masses are ready to follow, be it in the right direction or in the wrong."

"Very true," was the reply; "and knowing that fact as they must, they should be very careful indeed that the decrees of fashion *are* in the right direction before the ball is set rolling."

"There are many instances," said Helena, "where prominent society women should take a decided stand, and one of them is against the docking of horses' tails.

It is cruel, brutal; and if our fashionable women would not only denounce it, but would positively refuse to ride behind a horse having a docked tail, docked tails would soon disappear. I have already spoken to several of my friends on the subject, and I find that our noblest women are bitterly opposed to it. But the majority rules, and is selfishly indifferent, particularly the shallow, frivolous, and ultra-fashionable set, who delight in new fads and extremes. Really, it seems to me that women in their indifference to dumb animals are as bad if not worse than men."

"Not worse, surely, and certainly more sympathetic," suggested Mr. Byran, "but very thoughtless."

"People have no right to be thoughtless concerning such cruel customs," said Helena. "I wish," she added earnestly, "that every man and woman in the land would read 'Black Beauty.' It would arouse their sympathies in behalf of suffering horses."

"Yes," said Mr. Bryan, "'Black Beauty' is a classic, and should be among the literature of our schools. I have often wondered," he continued, "if the owners of horses realize the awful torture they inflict by this practice. Is it possible they know that the operation requires the use of a knife, and the prompt application of a red hot iron to sear the flesh and prevent the poor animal from bleeding to death? I have no respect," he added emphatically, "for any man, who knowingly subjects his horses to such needless pain."

"I should think," said Helena thoughtfully, "that writers would say more on these subjects than they do; they certainly have great opportunities to educate those who are blind to their own experiences."

"My dear girl, all people do not reason as you do;

they act on impulse, rush blindly into anything which will gratify their whims and caprice, without a thought of the suffering that may be caused by their vanity and selfishness. If all the world were like you, my child, no such customs as these would exist."

"Well, father," she replied, "after receiving so much praise, I can do no less than promise not only to never wear a bird or a wing in my hats and bonnets, but never to ride behind a horse, or beside a saddle horse, having a docked tail. And I will use all my influence against these cruelties if you will only say that I may go to Clydesville on the twenty-third of next month."

"Suppose I say no; what then?"

"Well, even so, I'll keep my promise just the same in behalf of the poor animals. But I'm sure you will not say 'no.' You will not, will you, father?"

"That depends," he returned.

"Depends on what?"

"On how long you intend to stay away. Will you agree to not stay long? and to not go around renewing acquaintance with your old neighbors?"

"I shall want to see my mother's friend, Mrs. Marvin," returned the girl earnestly; "but I will only stay one day—or two, at the longest. When I left Clydesville I disappeared very suddenly, and no one there has heard one word from me since. I don't suppose many ever gave me a thought, but I'm sure Mrs. Marvin must have wondered many a time what ever became of me; and I am equally sure that she will be glad to see me again, and know my fate after all these years. How surprised she will be!"

"Well, I suppose I might as well give my consent,"

said Mr. Bryan resignedly, "for when the day comes, you will be of age, and I dare say if it were withheld you would simply go without it. So I can only say yes. But remember your promise, Helena, and only be gone two days,"

Helena was greatly pleased at the prospect in store, but Mr. Bryan had many misgivings. He could only hope that her memory relative to her childhood was not as active as his own.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE twenty-third of October was a perfect day, bright, and warm, with here and there a golden-hued cloud to be seen in the otherwise clear sky. Soon after the 3.15 p.m. train from New York arrived, the lumbering old stage coach bore Helena Byran from the railway station at Saxtontown back to the scenes of her childhood. Passing through the main thoroughfare of the town she observed that the stores and public buildings which then had appeared so tall and grand, appeared to her now strangely inferior.

"How low and odd they look," she thought. "It hardly seems possible they are the same; but I suppose my ideas have enlarged, and these buildings look shrunken by comparison."

Soon they were passing through the same long street where years before she had wandered from door to door vainly seeking admittance. These houses remained unchanged—even to her—except for a more weather worn look. No fires had burned the old ones

down ; no new ones had been erected. How lifeless, how dead the old street looked ; not a person was visible from one end to the other. As they approached the place where tired, hungry and disheartened, she had thrown herself by the wayside to rest, she looked eagerly through the grimy bit of glass in the stage door, while unbidden a tear came to her eye. She knew the very spot by the old butternut tree, under which she had lain. Time had dealt lightly with the tree ; it remained unchanged ; she recognized it at once. But the tree, even had it possessed sight, would never have recognized in her the little sobbing child it had so lovingly sheltered from the sun's fierce rays on that August day twelve years before.

How well she remembered that day, and how dark everything had appeared to her despite the bright sunshine, until the kindly book agent so opportunely came along.

"Poor man," she muttered, thinking of Mr. Ruden. "I wonder how he is—how they all are, and if they are prosperous and happy? How much I owe them? I have never realized it so keenly before. Whatever would have become of me only for them, only for him! Probably someone would have returned me to Mrs. Hopdyke, else consigned me to the poor house, and there I might have remained in ignorance and drudgery until my fifteenth birthday, for I never would have known the contents of that letter had it not been for Mrs. Ruden. They say 'all's well that ends well'; and in many respects the saying is true. But poor Mr. Ruden! I cannot help but think of him to-day. I suppose he is still struggling with poverty, while I—alas! how thoughtless I have been ; but I

hope it is not too late yet to show my appreciation of all that he and his wife did for me. And when they are remunerated, I shall feel that my journey this day was not in vain. How old scenes revive old memories; I am glad it is so, otherwise the Rudens might eventually have passed from my mind as though their existence had been only a dream."

As the stage approached Clydesville, the scene became more and more familiar, and recollections long forgotten were brought vividly to mind. To the right just across a rustic bridge spanning the creek, stood the red, weather-beaten farm house where Mrs. Asa Perkins lived; the woman who, on the day of the auction, had spoken so cruelly against her mother.

"Yes, I remember distinctly," the girl mused, "of detecting her, with several others, while they were rumaging through my mother's clothing, and of overhearing some malicious remarks concerning a pair of long-wristed gloves, a fan, and some pink silk stockings which they had found. Poor mother! undoubtedly they recognized her superiority, and that fact, together with her better clothes, created jealousy among the crude women of the place. Goodness! wouldn't I be denounced though, far more than my mother ever was, if they were to get a glimpse into my wardrobe. City people wear what they please, and excite no comment except, probably, admiration for their taste; but country folks must dress as their neighbors please, or run the risk of being called 'stuck up,' and ridiculed accordingly."

A little further on, away over to the left on the old turnpike road, winding along the base of the hill, she recognized the tall red chimneys on Timothy Hop-

dyke's house. In one sense all memories of the unhappy time passed under that roof seemed like a fading dream; but as the house became more distinct, the dream became more vivid and real.

"I would like to know," the girl thought, "what Mrs. Hopdyke said when she called me and found that I had taken French leave? How she must have fumed, and 'sputtered,' as Mr. Timothy called it. I dare say she vented half her spite on him, poor man. If I remember rightly she intended to send Martha to school that fall, and keep me at home to help 'chore' and to pare and string all the apples for drying; but I imagine she had to do them herself, for about that time I was very busily and happily engaged in visiting and admiring the animals in Central Park every pleasant afternoon. That reminds me of the book of animals Mr. Ruden gave me. I hope Martha enjoyed it, and had one half the pleasure with her animals that I had with mine. Parting with the book, I remember, nearly broke my heart; but children's hearts are easily mended, and the real animals soon mended mine."

On reaching the outskirts of the village Helena left the stage, not wishing to attract attention or to excite comment by driving to her own home. The sun was far in the west, and as the jolting old stage went on, she shaded her eyes from its rays, and eagerly looked in the direction of two houses, standing a quarter of a mile or so away. One was a pretty cottage of no mean dimensions; the other house, which stood on the opposite side of the street a few yards further on, was an imposing structure for a place like Clydesville. Even the trees surrounding it were more majestic,

towering high above their neighbors. Noble old trees they were, although scantily attired in the remains of what had been a gorgeous October foliage.

For several minutes she gazed wistfully, longingly, toward the house and the ivy-covered cottage, standing almost within its shadow. Both had been dear to her in bygone days, and the memory of those bygone days made them dear to her still.

"What feelings of sadness come over me with those scenes," she murmured. "How forcibly events of my childhood come back to me. My poor mother! I can almost see her as she looked then, and I can understand something now of how she felt, knowing she must die and leave me alone."

Crossing a common, she proceeded by a round-about path to the churchyard where her parents lay. Without difficulty she found their graves—both marked by neat though unpretentious stones—and sat down on the ground beside them.

"My dear mother," she exclaimed softly, "I have come back to you again, after all these years! The last time I was here——"

The girl suddenly paused; her lips compressed. "Yes," she continued musingly, "it was the last time —the very last! I never came again. The next day I went to Mrs. Hopdyke's, and was never in the neighborhood after that until the night I ran away. In the morning I went past, but it was barely daylight; and in my haste to get beyond recovery, I merely paused a moment by the roadside to bid the place farewell."

Her eyes rested on a spot toward the foot of her mother's grave. "Yes," she muttered, "there is the

very place where we stood, we children, that moonlight night. What strange little creatures we must have been! Whoever heard of children doing a thing like that before? Have I forgotten him? Ah no! never for one hour! My little boy husband," she whispered tenderly, "how well I remember his bright handsome face. Never will I forget how he looked as he lay there sleeping in the dim light when I kissed him good bye. Nor will I forget how my poor little heart ached at the parting, and the uncertainty in store for me. Dear Billy, I have faithfully kept my promise; my twenty-first birthday is not yet passed, and I am back, only separated from you by a few steps. I wonder if you are thinking of me, and expecting me to return? What if he has forgotten me?"

The thought caused a tightening of her lips. "But no! I cannot believe it!" she exclaimed. "He was older than I, and so earnest, so sincere. There was a time long ago, Billy, when I was almost influenced to believe that we did not belong to each other, and that I must give you up. But the older I grew, and the more I thought it over, the more strongly I became impressed with the fact that our vows were sacred, and that I belonged to you, and you to me. I had promised not to mention your name, and I kept the promise, but I did not—I could not cease to think of you."

As the sun was setting Helena arose, and turned to leave the churchyard. When near the gate she paused to look at an isolated grave, which was newer than any of the others and marked by a simple white slab. Stepping around to the front she read: "In memory of Timothy Hopdyke, who went to his long

rest September 10th, 18—; aged 55 years, 8 months, and 4 days."

"Poor man!" she exclaimed in genuine sorrow. "How good and kind he was to me; how I would like to see him again. But I hope he is far happier now than he was on earth. He surely is at rest, and no longer a prey to the continual upbraiding which annoyed him so much. I wonder if his wife ever realized how unhappy she made him? Probably, as is often the case, she does now, when too late."

From the churchyard she walked slowly to the pretty cottage—her old home. Finding the door unlocked she went hurriedly in, cautiously closing it behind her. The atmosphere was dense and musty; an odor pervaded suggestive of rats and mice, and the windows were obscured by cobwebs. Over the door was a last year's hornet's nest, while on the floor in one corner was a nest of young mice—pink as newborn babies and no larger than bumble bees. Their squeaking little cry attracted her attention, and she discovered them writhing and wriggling about, impatient at the delay of the parent mouse which doubtless was off in search of food. Opening her hand-bag she withdrew some fruit and an untasted sandwich, which she scattered on the floor around their nest. "There," she said, "you shall have one good meal if you never have another; and I hope for your sakes, you poor little hairless things, that no cat, or trap, has caught your mother."

With feelings similar to entering a long deserted tomb, she went to the room where her mother had suffered and died. There was the same open fireplace, unused since that April night when, sitting on her

little ottoman in front of its glowing embers, she had quietly wept for fear her mother would not get well—little knowing the end was so near. Opposite was the alcove, where her mother's bed had stood, and where only a few hours later she had quietly passed away.

What strange impressions the girl experienced standing in that musty, mouldy room in the early twilight. How vividly the sad events of that April night came to her mind, and the grief, and horror, she had felt on awaking to find her mother lying beside her cold and dead.

"O mother!" she exclaimed; "if you could only have stayed with me a few years longer, until I knew you better, it seems to me I would have been better satisfied."

As the darkness came on she bade the place farewell, and walked quickly to the "big house" further on—the pride and glory of Clydesville. Her heart began to throb; her breath came fast, but on ascending the steps she felt a pang of disappointment amounting to nameless dread. There were no visible signs of life, no light, no one stirring. No sound of a miniature express wagon being drawn over the gravelled walks as of yore; no kite, or rubber balls; no sail boat or locomotive engine, all standing about, or piled up in dire confusion on the piazza, as was the case the last time she was there.

"No," she thought, with a tinge of sadness; "those things belong to the past, with the little round-headed Billy of my childhood. He has no use for kites or toy engines now. How I would like to see him once more though just as he was then. But why is the

house so quiet? Suppose they have moved away, or——"

She hurriedly rang the bell, then waited in suspense. But her fears were groundless. In small towns and villages old residents like the Marvins—living on ancestral estates—seldom move, or materially change their mode of life. Soon her summons was answered by a diminutive, elfish-looking servant, who seated her in the parlor, than rather volubly began:

"My missus, her's taking her tea up in her own room, 'cause her do not like to take her dinner in the big dining-room when her do be alone; and Mr. Marvin he do be away across the sea."

Endeavoring to maintain a serious face Helena said: "Tell Mrs. Marvin after she has finished her tea, that Miss Bryan would like to see her." Whereupon this queer morsel of repetitions vanished to inform her "missus" of the arrival of a guest.

"Miss Bryan?" repeated Mrs. Marvin. "Who can she be? I know of no one by that name."

"I do conclude, missus, that her do not belong around here; leastwise judging from the way her do be dressed, for her do look prezactly like them women do look in the fashion books, w'at you do get when you do go to town."

"Angevenia," said Mrs. Marvin smiling, "will you never learn to be less extravagant with your 'hers,' and your 'do's.' Positively, you manage to insert a 'her," or a 'do,' between almost every other word. Do you think it sounds well?"

"To me it do, missus, 'cause the lady do be a her, and not a him," returned the incorrigible Angevenia, as she glided from the room.

Mrs. Marvin was the same sweet-faced woman as of old, a little more stately, perhaps, but the same lovely character. Having finished her tea, she descended the stairs, curious as to who her visitor—resembling a fashion plate—could be.

Not long was she kept in ignorance. Without ceremony Helena made herself known, and the next moment was fondly clasped within Mrs. Marvin's motherly arms.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"My dear child," exclaimed Mrs. Marvin tenderly, "this is indeed a great pleasure, a great surprise, and a great relief to see you again when I had long since given you up. You little know how I grieved when you disappeared so suddenly, and many a night I have lain awake wondering where you were, and what had been your fate."

Helena explained fully the manner of her going, and the happy result. Mrs. Marvin was greatly interested in her story, and admitted that she was heartily glad Helena had not heeded her advice and gone back to Mrs. Hopdyke.

"Yes," she admitted, "it was all for the best; I see it plainly now. But had you only let me known of your good fortune, what a world of worry and suspense it would have saved me."

"I did not consider the importance of it then as I would now," returned the girl regretfully. "Besides,

my father—Mr. Bryan—did not wish me to hold any communication whatever with Clydesville. He did not realize, I suppose, that anyone here would worry about me; and having resolved to adopt me as his daughter, it was his wish that I should forget anything and everything relating to the past. Do not blame him, dear Mrs. Marvin," she proceeded eagerly. "You do not know him; but believe me he is the noblest and best of men. I love him very dearly; no real father could have been kinder or better to me, and not one in a hundred as kind."

"Was he willing for you to come to Clydesville, now?"

"He did not really object, except in so far as my being from home was concerned. He knows that we cannot control our memories, and that despite his wish to the contrary, I have not forgotten that my childhood days were passed in Clydesville; and knowing, as well, that I wished to come, he generously consented, just as he has done in everything else all my life. But, Mrs. Marvin, you evidently are alone; where is—Mr. Marvin?"

"In England; he went last month, and may not return until spring. A brother of his died more than a year ago, leaving a valuable estate in chancery to be settled, and Mr. Marvin found it necessary to go."

"Then Mr. Marvin is English," said Helena. "I never knew that. But then, I don't suppose when I lived here that I knew an Englishman from a Dutchman, or a Hottentot, for that matter. And you, Mrs. Marvin, are you English, too?"

"O no; I'm thoroughly American; in fact, I am a 'Daughter of the Revolution.' My paternal grand-

father, Archibald Burton, was an officer in Washington's army, and after the war he settled here, where my father, Doctor Archibald junior, built this house, in which I was born."

"So this estate in reality belongs to you?"

"Yes; I was my father's only heir—my brother having died in childhood."

For the moment an old feeling of resentment against Mr. Marvin was revived within the girl's breast. So the house and estate belonged to his wife, and yet he had obstinately refused her—a poor friendless little girl—admission; and permitted her to go to that ill-bred, vulgar woman, as a menial and a drudge. And this arbitrary, despotic man was her prospective father-in-law. A cheerful prospect, indeed! So far as the mother-in-law was concerned it was, to a degree, quite another case as "Naomi and Ruth," but she entertained no such daughterly love for the mother-in-law's husband.

"But," she soliloquized, "what need it matter to me? We shall not be compelled to live with Mr. Marvin. No," she thought with a pardonable feeling of pride and malicious revenge; "we shall be quite independent of him. Thank Heaven! I am no longer the portionless, forlorn little creature whom Billy wedded that moonlight night. My home and social position are both superior to Mr. Marvin's, and he cannot look upon me as under any obligation to him, nor one whom he can dictate to and tyrannize over, in a way he has no doubt dictated and tyrannized over his wife from the day—according to his estimation—that he had a legal right to do so."

Helena did not pose as a "new woman;" but her

somewhat progressive, and thoroughly American opinions were quite up-to-date, and in sympathy with those women whose husbands scouted the idea that their wives knew anything, and assumed authority to domineer over them.

"I wish Mr. Marvin were home; I'm sure he would be glad to see you, and to know of your good fortune," said Mrs. Marvin quietly.

The girl smiled a faint response. "Mr. Marvin is well connected, I believe?" she remarked interrogatively.

It occurred to her afterwards that it was a strange question to ask a wife concerning her husband. But the circumstances were extenuating. As a child questions of pedigree never were thought of; but she was somewhat worldly wise now, and naturally felt interested, and justified as well, in seeking to know something of the family of the man whose destiny she had long considered as her own. Not that she had any thought of being disloyal to Billy, no matter what his father's pedigree might have been; nevertheless, it would be a satisfaction to know that he, as well as the mother, was well connected.

"O yes," was Mrs. Marvin's good-humored and rather complacent reply. "Mr. Marvin is very well connected indeed."

"Did you become acquainted with him in England?" Helena asked carelessly.

"No; in this country. When quite a young man he spent one summer at Colorado Springs in company with an invalid brother—the one who has recently died. My father and I were there at the same time and we became acquainted. Two years later Mr.

Marvin came to this country again and we were married. We went directly to England and remained a year, during which time I often met with different members of his family."

Despite Helena's prejudice, she was gratified to know that Mr. Marvin, from a social standpoint might be considered an honorable and influential gentleman, even although in his own home he was selfish and tyrannical.

Mrs. Marvin suddenly rose. "My dear child," she exclaimed; "in my surprise and joy at seeing you I have forgotten everything else. But you have had no dinner. How thoughtless of me!"

"I think I can do justice to one now," replied Helena, "and," she added laughing, "if I remember rightly, the last time I came to you I was hungry—hungry as a little bear, having been sent to bed supperless; and the supper you gave me was the last good square meal I had for a long time."

"Yes, I remember," returned Mrs. Marvin, "and I promised to give you a drive in the morning after breakfast but you preferred a walk—and walked away."

"I'll not serve you that way this time, but will stay for breakfast with you if no longer."

Mrs. Marvin rang, and soon Angevenia appeared. "Tell Johannah to have some dinner served as quickly as possible," she said.

"Missus, I do hate to tell you," said Angevenia, "but Johannah do not be in, 'cause this do be her night off, and her went out prezactly as soon as her had got your tea ready."

Mrs. Marvin looked dismayed. "I fear, Helena,

that you will have to excuse me for a while," she said, "and I will see what I can do in the way of dinner."

"Missus," continued the undersized servant, "I do know how to make gooder tea than Johannah do, and I do conclude there be most a whole cold duck left; and I do know there be most a tureen full of peas what's yet hot, and everything else in accordance. And I do know I can get up a nice little supper all alone, I do."

"Well, if you 'do know,' Angevenia," said Mrs. Marvin, "be spry and let us see what your best effort will 'do.'"

"What an extraordinary specimen of humanity," said Helena, as the servant fairly flew from the room. "Where did you get her? and what is she, any way? —a child or a woman?"

"She seems in some ways to be both," replied Mrs. Marvin. "She certainly is dwarfed in stature, and partly in intellect; but she is very kind-hearted, and obliging, and in many ways quite capable. I've not had her long; she only came to supply Bertha's place— my upstairs girl—while she is away for a few weeks. But Angevenia likes it here so well, and I feel such a sympathy for her, that I intend to keep her right along, even after Bertha returns."

"That reminds me of Miss Nancy," said Helena. "You remember her, Mrs. Marvin? Is she still living?"

"O yes, and goes out doing general housework by the day the same as ever. But she is growing old; her face is like parchment, and her hair as white as snow."

"Is she very poor?"

"No indeed. She has quite a snug little fortune

laid away, besides owning the house in which she lives. But she can neither read or write, and is only happy when at some drudgery. People must have something to occupy their minds, you know, and tastes differ. Intellectual people can be happy with their own thoughts or their books; but persons of Miss Nancy's calibre can barely exist if alone. They are entirely dependent on other people's thoughts—their own are not worth thinking."

"There are lots of people like her, particularly in the latter respect," said Helena, laughing, "who haven't even the excuse poor old Nancy has, for they can both read and write, and while they would notice quick enough a cobweb on their wall, they fail to detect the gathering cobwebs in their brains."

Mrs. Marvin went out to see how Angevenia was progressing in her new line of duty, and Helena rose and walked impatiently about the room.

"Where can *he* be?" she kept asking herself. "Why does he not come? Several times I fancied I heard his footstep. Why do I hesitate to ask for him? There is no reason why I should, and yet ——"

At that moment Mrs. Marvin re-entered, and announced that Angevenia's "supper" was ready, and a very creditable one at that. The tea was served in little dainty gold cups of rare design.

"What pretty tea-cups," said Helena. "I don't think I ever saw any like these before."

A pleased look lighted Mrs. Marvin's face as she replied: "They are something out of the usual order, I imagine. My son brought them to me from Chicago, during the World's Fair."

Her son! The blood surged to the girl's very tem-

ples. She kept her eyes riveted on the cup, not daring to raise them.

"They are not solid gold," continued Mrs. Marvin in a matter of fact sort of way, "but gold leaf, I believe, plated by some new process on porcelain. But he thought they would please me, being souvenirs of the Fair."

"'My son,' thought Helena. "He was 'Billy,' when I knew him, but I suppose that name was discarded with his toys."

"Helena," said Mrs. Marvin suddenly, "you surely remember my boy, do you not?—the little Billy you used to play with?"

"O yes; I remember him very well," she returned, trying to speak easily. "By the way, where is he? I should like very much to see him."

The ice was broken at last; the girl experienced a feeling of relief, and with abated breath awaited the information so long forthcoming.

"He has been home but little for the past eight years," said Mrs. Marvin. "At sixteen he went to Yale college, and remained three years. Then five years ago he went to New York, and has seldom been home since, except occasionally on Saturday to remain over Sunday."

Billy in New York! and had been for five years! That was indeed a revelation to her. "What is he doing there?" she asked with a show of friendly interest.

"He is in business for himself on lower Broadway. When he first went a friend of Mr. Marvin gave him a position in his office; but he gradually worked his way up until now he is a member of the firm."

"I wonder if he remembers me?"

"Indeed he does. You have no idea how he brooded over your going away as you did. Positively, he took the matter very much to heart, and for a time was inconsolable. Very often he went over to the Hopdykes' to see if you had returned, or if they had heard anything concerning you; but at last he came to me one day, looking very dejected and said: "Mother, I don't believe she will ever come back now until she is a big girl and is her own boss; but just as soon as she is she will surely come because she promised to."

Helena laughed. "His prophecy was quite correct," she said with a careless air of gaiety. "When you see him, Mrs. Marvin, you may tell him so for me; and tell him that on the very day I attained my legal freedom, or, as he expressed it, became my own 'boss,' I kept my promise and came."

"He will be delighted, I know, to hear from you again," said Mrs. Marvin. "I only wish he were here to see you; how surprised he would be. I am very proud of my boy," she continued fondly, "and indeed, I have good reason to be, for he is in every way worthy of my affection."

"Did—did your son ever speak of me after he became older?" Helena asked hesitatingly, yet with ill-concealed eagerness.

"O yes; often. And when he went to college almost his last words were: 'Mother, if ever you hear from Helena, let me know at once: and should she return, keep her with you until I can get here, for I'll come on the first train.'"

A flush of pleasure overspread the girl's face. "It

is pleasant to know that I was so kindly remembered," she said in an explanatory sort of way. "For I assure you, Mrs. Marvin, I have often thought of the only friend of my childhood, and with the kindliest thoughts possible."

After a moment's silence, she said rather abruptly: "Do you really think he still remembers me?—has he spoken of me since he grew up?—that is—since he went to New York?"

"I am sure he remembers you, and very kindly, too," returned Mrs. Marvin, "although I cannot say that he has spoken of you for the past few years. But," she added with a suspicion of apology in her tone, "that is only because he has been so engrossed with business matters, and not because he has forgotten you."

The pleased flush suddenly died away from the girl's face; she felt oppressed, and realized that she was wearied with the day's journey. Ere long she bade her hostess good night and retired to her room. Not that she wished to sleep, but for the sake of being alone.

"So he has not spoken of me for several years," she thought, while a feeling of grief and pain shot through her heart. "What does it mean? Is it merely that since reaching manhood he feels delicate in speaking of me, or has city life and its associations caused me to drop entirely from his mind? Or, suppose, since coming in contact with the world and its sordid opinions that he views the matter from a worldly, or financial standpoint, and remembering me only as an obscure little girl whom he would not care

now to acknowledge as his wife, attaches no importance to that childish act and prefers to forget it."

After the house became quiet and the inmates were sleeping, Helena stole cautiously to the same room where she had so cautiously stolen once before. There stood the same little bed with its pretty blue canopy; there was the same little pillow where his fair head lay when she so carefully, so tenderly kissed him good bye. Standing there, she realized that never again would she see the Billy of her childish dreams—he was absorbed in the man.

"And alas!" she thought, "I fear the man has forgotten me. Well, I have been loyal to him all these years, and now have returned; but he is not here."

Sinking into a chair she took from her purse a little gold ring, and gazed upon it lovingly. "When he removed this from his own finger that night, and placed it on mine, he said: 'Wear it, Helena, until it gets too small, then lay it away; and every time you look at it you must think of me, and remember that you are my wife.'"

"The next morning directly after breakfast, Mrs. Marvin seated herself at her desk. "I am going to write to Billy," she said, "and tell him, Helena, that you are here. He will receive the letter sometime to-morrow, and perhaps find time to run home the day after."

But Helena strenuously protested against such a proceeding. "Please do not write him, Mrs. Marvin," she said quickly. "In the first place I cannot remain so long; I promised father that I would return either to-day, or to-morrow at the very latest. Besides, it might inconvenience your son very much to leave his

business on so short a notice, and—very likely he is not sufficiently interested in me now to care to come, that is, on *my* account only."

"You are wrong, I assure you!" was the quick reply. "He has always spoken of you in the most kindly manner, and been so anxious to know what had become of you, and ——"

"But that was years ago, Mrs. Marvin," the girl interposed hurriedly. "You said he had not spoken of me for the last few years, and that proves his boyish interest in me has ceased."

"But Helena, I promised long ago to let him know if you came, or if I heard from you; and the promise still holds good."

Helena rapidly considered the situation a moment, then stepping to Mrs. Marvin's side said entreatingly: "Please do not write to him, I beg of you. I have a little plan all arranged to surprise him, and if you write it will spoil it all, and quite upset the arrangement. So please, dear Mrs. Marvin, heed me in this."

"What is your 'little plan?'" Mrs. Marvin asked with a doubting smile.

The girl hesitated a moment, not quite knowing how to proceed. Then, as though an inspiration had seized her, said:

"You may write him after all, but let me dictate the letter."

"Very well, what shall I write?"

"Tell him," suggested Helena, "that a Miss Bryan from New York, has been visiting in Clydesville, and inasmuch as you have become acquainted with her, she has undertaken some little commissions from you in which he will be interested. Then request that he

call on Miss Bryan at Number — West Fifty-seventh Street, next Tuesday evening at eight o'clock, at which time she will be expecting him."

"Anything more?"

"No; only let me implore you not to intimate in any way that Miss Bryan and Helena Channing are one and the same."

"Very well, my dear; it shall be as you wish," was the indulgent reply. "And after Billy has called, you must write me a full account of the interview, and tell me just what he said when you make yourself known."

CHAPTER XIX.

MRS. MARVIN would not listen to her guest returning home that morning. "You were granted two days," she said pleadingly, "and you must remain with me until the limit, and that is far too soon; I shall part with you very reluctantly. But, my dear girl, I trust our acquaintance has not been renewed for merely a day. I shall expect in future to see you often; and the next time you come let it be for a visit, and not a mere call."

During the morning Mrs. Marvin produced a large package carefully wrapped and labeled: "For Helena Channing."

"Helena," she said, "this contains a number of relics which belonged to your mother. When she died you were too young to be entrusted with them, so I laid them away for safe keeping, and I am very glad to see them restored to you. Here, also, is your

bank book for the balance of your grandmother Channing's account in the Saxtontown bank, which your mother handed me before she died, expecting that I would look after your interests. Your dear mother lived so prudently, and tried so hard to save everything for you, that after all expenses were paid, there still remained in the bank in your name, nine hundred dollars; and with the accumulated interest, together with the proceeds from your household furniture, there is now something over sixteen hundred. Besides this there is the house and grounds—a very good little property in themselves—awaiting your disposal."

"What about the taxes?" asked Helena.

"I have paid them regularly every year, and——"

"O Mrs. Marvin, how good of you! I suppose had you not, the place would have been sold for unpaid taxes long ago."

"Don't give me too much credit," said Mrs. Marvin, frankly. "I suppose it was done with a selfish motive. You see, I feared if it were sold, I might have had undesirable neighbors, and I paid them rather than run any such risk. But it was a small matter, not worth speaking about; taxable property here, and in New York city, are two different things, you know."

After luncheon, Helena went out for a walk and, on the same principle that restless spirits are said to haunt the scenes of their earthly misery, she instinctively set out in the direction of Mrs. Timothy Hopdyke's.

"Yes," she thought, "I would really like to see my old enemy once more; and I shall ask Martha for my book of animals—she has kept it quite long enough, inasmuch as I have never even looked it through. It

will be a keepsake, and (as poor Mr. Timothy would say) 'ef I ever git to be conceity, an' big feelin', or sorter stuck up like,' why that book will be a quiet reminder of less palmy days—days when (as Mrs. Winter once told me) I knew more about a mop than I did a piano. Well, there's one consolation: I am quite proficient now in the knowledge of both; but I imagine that my knowledge of the former quiet exceeds that of any girl of my acquaintance."

It was a long two miles to the Hopdyke farm, so leaving the village street Helena went "cross lots," going through the open fields and meadows, it being the much nearer route, and one which would bring her to the rear entrance of the farm. But on arriving there she found that the old let-down bars had disappeared, and she was compelled to climb over the high rail fence—a feat not so easy to perform as it once had been. Before her was the great Hopdyke meadow, now yellow and seared by the October frosts, but which had been filled with tall green grass when she had seen it last.

"How grieved and angry I was that day," she muttered. "I remember very well coming out here and throwing myself on the ground to cry my anger off, little knowing that Mrs. Hopdyke had done me the greatest favor possible in leaving me behind. It was fortunate, though, that I woke when I did, and returned to the house. Had I not, I would have missed Mr. Ruden, and then—well, Heaven only knows what my destiny would have been."

Proceeding as far as the garden, she again paused. "How familiar it looks," she thought. "There are the remains of this year's cabbages, and tomato vines,

growing on the very same spot as those I was asked to protect from the pigs and chickens that day while I sat under the apple tree and knitted on a coarse woolen sock, which Mrs. Timothy had "sot up." And actually," she exclaimed laughing, "there are the very pigs and chickens now!—but no! What am I thinking of? These are only the progeny of the pigs and chickens I knew, and a good many generations removed at that."

Over in the corner stood the identical bush under which she had dug a hole in the ground to hide her jewel case. Passing the smoke house, where Mr. Timothy's pigs were converted into hams, she saw that the well had a new green pump, in place of the dilapidated windlass and old oaken bucket which she had been made to fill scores of times.

"Ah well," she mused, "I could wander around for hours amid these old scenes; strange to say they fascinate me. But I must hasten; my time is growing short."

Approaching the house from the rear she suddenly observed, standing near the back steps, the identical rain barrel, apparently, into which she had once fallen on "washin' day," when getting water for the boiler; and she remembered Mrs. Timothy's rage because she got wet and would have to change her clothes, "an' the b'iler ain't near full yit," Mrs. Timothy had said. "Marthy" was told to fill it, and for once she was perfectly willing to do so, and she danced around in high glee because "Heleny got a duckin'."

The back door was open and, as was the custom among the farmers' wives, Helena went to it and knocked. Soon a florid-faced woman appeared, whose sleeves were tucked up beyond her freckled elbows,

and who evidently went about her work with a checked gingham sun-bonnet on her head. She eyed her caller curiously, as if she were some curiosity. Helena returned her stare with interest, but could discover in her no trace of Mrs. Hopdyke. To her inquiry the woman replied :

" The Hopdykses don't live here no longer, an' ain't fur quite a spell ; but if you'll just step in, miss, I'll tell ye all I know about 'em."

Helena stepped into the large familiar kitchen and sat down on a yellow wooden chair, which the woman wiped off with one corner of her blue calico apron. She smiled involuntarily as in imagination she pictured herself arrayed in one of Martha's outgrown red calico dresses, sweeping the floor, washing the zinc under the stove, now and then bringing in an armful of wood or a pan of chips from the wood pile in the back yard, and so on all day long. A huge boiler of clothes was boiling away on the big red-hot stove, filling the room with steam of a most offensive odor.

" I guess," said the woman with a critical look, " thet you don't b'long to these parts ?"

" No," returned Helena briefly.

" You live over to Saxtontown, I reckon ?"

" No ; I never lived there."

" Be you any relation to the Hopdykses ?"

" No ; none whatever."

" Oh ! well then, mebby you live ——"

" I live in New York," returned Helena.

" You don't mean New York city ?"

" Yes."

" You don't say so ! Well then, mebby you're acquainted with Phil Yateses wife—her that was Sally

Gosper. When she was a girl she lived around here, but Phil he was too stuck up to be a farm-hand, so him an' her went down to New York to live."

"No; I never heard of them before," said Helena.

"How strange! Well then, there's Rachel Fletcher; she's a milliner down there somewhere. Do you know her?"

"No; I cannot say that I do."

"Thet's kind o' queer too! Well, mos' likely you know the Gibbses for sure? She was Asa Perkinses sister an' she married Matt Gibbs, an' laws! I hear they're a puttin' on lots o' airs since they went to live in the city an' him a gettin' sixty dollars a month a floor-walkin'—whatever thet is. Laws knows, I ought to know for I does 'nough of it an' I don't git no sixty dollars a month for it neither."

"In what part of the city do they live?" asked Helena greatly amused.

"Well, I can't say as to thet, for I didn't know the city was in parts. I thought it was all one thing."

"Do you know their street?"

"O laws!" replied the woman, "they don't live on no street at all; they're too stuck up for thet. They live on one o' them avenues, though what the difference is 'tween a avenue an' a street is more'n I know. What avenue do you live on?" she asked suddenly.

"I don't live on an avenue, I live in West Fifty-seventh Street," said Helena with a quiet smile.

"Oh!" returned the hostess in a tone indicating that her visitor had depreciated a degree in her estimation. "Well," she continued after a pause, "the Gibbses is pretty well fixed, I expect, an' can afford to live in a pretty good place. I forgit the number o' their house,

but it's somewheres on First Avenue near Eighth Street, an' it's over a butcher shop. So if you want to go and see 'em when you git back home it's easy 'nough to find 'em. But you don't know 'em you say?"

"No; I can't say that I do."

"It 'pears to me," returned the woman "thet you don't seem to know none o' your neighbors. Why, I knows every one o' mine for miles round; an' if I lived down where you do I'd know everybody worth knowin' within gunshot o' the town in less'n no time. There's nothin' like bein' in with your neighbors an' havin' places to go an' visit an' stay to supper once 'n a while. It cheers a body up wonderful; besides, the vi'tuals tastes better away from home. One gits tired o' their own cookin' an' likes a change now an' then."

Just then the boiler of clothes began to boil over—the hot foaming suds pouring in streams down the sides and over the stove with a hissing sound equal to that of a steam engine. The woman grabbed the broom handle and gave them a poke, then rather apologetically remarked:

"'Tain't often I gets caught a washin' this time o' day, ner this time o' week neither. But Monday I was laid up with rheumatiz in my left thigh. Did you ever have it there?" she asked, suddenly.

Helena shook her head.

"Well, you're lucky. But as I was a sayin', Tuesday I had to go to town with a tub o' butter thet I've been keepin' ever sence June, 'cause prices is higher now than they was then; and Wednesday I done up the week's bakin', an' this mornin' I done the churnin" an' so this afternoon there was no help for it but to wash. But I guess mebby you'd better step into the

front room. I don't mind the smell o' the suds myself 'cause I'm used to it; but I dare say it ain't very sweet smellin' to you."

Helena quite agreed with her and, glad to escape from the dense and rather pungent fog, followed the woman into the front room which was so dark after coming in from the bright sunlight, that she had to stand still until the woman rolled up one of the green paper shades, not daring to take a step for fear of knocking something over.

"Excuse me for mentionin' it," said the woman directly Helena was seated; "but I must say thet dress o' your'n is 'bout the slickest get up I ever seen; I wouldn't mind havin' one like it myself. Would you object, miss, to tellin' me how much it cost a yard an' how many yards it took?"

"I really don't remember, madam," returned Helena; "but my impression is that the material was not at all expensive. It's only a storm serge, suitable for roughing about in."

"Well then, it's just exactly what I need, for I'm always a 'roughin' about.' O yes," she continued, examining the material between her thumb and index finger, "come to see it real close it does look kind o' cheap an' coarse—somethin' like the homespun cloth thet my grandmother used to weave on the old loom. But then the makin' of it is jest tiptop. Did ye do it all yourself?"

"No; I had nothing to do with it. My tailor attended to that."

"Your what?—I thought tailors didn't do nothin' 'cept make men's clo'es?"

"There are ladies' tailors as well," said Helena, endeavoring to restrain a smile.

"Well, if thet don't beat all! Men a makin' women's dresses! an' cuttin' an' fittin' 'em too. Laws me! You ain't got no pattern of it, then, I s'pose?"

"No; I have not."

"O if thet ain't too bad! I was jest a thinkin' thet when you got home mebbe you'd lend it to me for I cuts an' fits all my own clo'es."

Helena judged as much from their appearance, but she did not say so—remembering that even the truth is not best spoken at all times.

"I would like real well," the woman resumed, "to have thet pattern. Ye see," she said in an explanatory way, "there's a woman lives around here thet tries mighty hard to outshine everybody else in the way o' dress. Her name is Arabella Caper, an' she's as full o' capers as her name is. She's a grass widder, too, an' pretty good lookin', which makes it worse. She used to go round doin' dairy work; but she got tired o' thet, so off she went, goodness knows where to. An' laws! sence she come back a few weeks ago with a lot o' fine fixin's, she's too big feelin' to know common folks at all. Goodness knows how she got 'em all. But with all of 'er toggery she ain't got no dress skirt like your'n is with them big folds a runnin' down the back of it. But I must say Arabella's Sunday hat looks a good deal like your'n does. My man says I can have all the butter money to do with as I like; an' nothin' would suit me better'n to buy a silk dress an' have it made like your'n. Ye see (excuse my plain speakin' but) the folks around here wouldn't think one o' them storm serges of much account;

they don't think nothin's any great shakes 'cept it's silk or satin. So if I could get a new silk dress an' have it made jest like your'n, sleeves an' all, an' go to meetin' some Sunday with it on, my! But wouldn't the folks stare. The Widder Caper in partic'lar."

"When I return home," said Helena, "I will send you a pattern by mail, as near like this as possible."

"You're wonderful kind, I'm sure," said the woman, "but I hate to put you out any," and she added dubiously, "I hope you won't have to buy it; though mos' likely you can borrow it from somebody."

Helena laughed. "I'll attend to that," she said. "And now I wish you would tell me where Mrs. Hopdyke is."

"O yes, the Hopdykses! I'd forgot all about 'em! Well, poor Timothy was a good soul, but he wasn't quite up to his wife in ways o' managin'; an' he took to spec'latin' an' the more he spec'lated the worse off he got. An' then the lightnin' struck his barn an' burned it to the ground, right after harvestin' too, when all the crops was in; an' him havin' no insurance on it it come pretty hard on him. Then their girl Marthy, she didn't turn out well no how; and finally she run away with a young squirt of a sewin' machine agent thet used to travel through here. I guess she must've got stuck on the big di'mond in his b'iled shirt front. Timothy took it to heart wonderful, an' got kind o' down-hearted, an' then everything seemed to go wrong, an' at last he had to sell the farm, an' so my man bought it. Then Timothy tried to pull himself together again an' he done some more spec'latin', an' thet settled 'im. Then he was took sick an' died, an' Mrs. Timothy she's a livin' with the Widder

Peters, over in thet shanty beyond the school house around the bend."

"And is Mrs. Hopdyke left really destitute?" Helena asked anxiously.

"Well, pretty nigh, I reckon. Of course she's got 'er feather bed an' 'er pillers an' some beddin', an a couple o' chairs an' a kitchen table an' some dishes an' a lot o' other truck besides the clo'es on 'er back. But laws me! she can't eat none o' them; an' only for the Widder Peters I don't know what she'd do. An' the worst of it is she's got poor health lately an' is kinder crippled up with rheumatiz so she can't do 'nough work to earn 'er salt, an I guess the Widder Peters needs all the salt she's got for 'erself."

Helena rose to go, but this exceedingly voluble woman followed her out to the gate, eager to tell all she knew.

"I've heard say," she remarked while walking down the narrow path, "that Mrs. Timothy won't allow she's got rheumatiz; she calls it 'gout,' thinkin' thet's a more highferlutin' name for it, but I've heard tell she never lived high 'nough to get gout. They do say she was awful near, an' stingy, an' used to use skimmed milk on the table so's to save every speck o' cream to make butter with an' then sell the butter."

"It's false!" returned Helena indignantly. "I know something about that matter myself, for I once lived with Mrs. Hopdyke several months."

With feelings of deep solicitude for her old enemy in her downfall, she walked rapidly away, the woman looking after her until she disappeared around the curve.

"I'd jest like to know," the woman muttered, "if

she'll do somethin' for Miss' Timothy? Laws knows, I give 'er hints 'nough. We ain't got nothin' to give; we need all we've got for ourselves an' more too. We've been land-poor ever sence we took this 'ere farm on our hands, an' it's took every cent we could rake an' scrape to build the new barn an' keep the fences mended, an' pay for hired help, an' broke mowin' machines to say nothin' about the interest on the mortgage." But if she can afford to hire her dresses made instead o' makin' 'em herself why, she she can jest do somethin' for Miss' Timothy's well's not. But landy sakes alive! them clo'es o' mine'll b'ile dry. It's lucky I washed up everythin' to-day, fer if I git thet pattern I'll let the washin' lay over next week' an' go to Saxtontown instead an' buy thet silk dress; an' then I'll keep all the doors shet, an' the window curtains down, so folks'll think I ain't to home, so they won't come a visitin', an' then I'll jest pitch in an' git thet dress done against Sunday week. An' then won't I come it over the Widder Caper in great shape? I bet I'll teach her afore I'm done with her not to be makin' eyes at my man agin!"

CHAPTER XX.

THE "shanty over beyond the red school house around the bend," was a rudely constructed board house containing only two rooms, and was a typical illustration of nature unadorned. Never had it known a coat of paint, a set of shutters or a change of shin-

gles. When it rained the dish-pan was placed on the floor in one corner to catch the drops as they came through the roof, the tin wash basin in another, while various other receptacles were scattered about here and there, according to the fierceness of the storm.

The kitchen, the largest room of the two, was where the occupants cooked and ate, and sat, and lived. A grimy, cheerless room it was, with its floor of rough hemlock boards, worn in places almost through, and dotted with big knot-holes, into which plugs of wood or old rags had been stuffed to prevent the rats from coming up. The only thing in the carpet line to cover its nakedness were two ungainly looking mats, made from different colored rags, which had been torn into narrow strips and sewed together, then braided and made into oval shaped affairs. The ceiling and low slanting rafters still bore traces of whitewash, but were now blackened by smoke and time. There being no cupboard, these same blackened rafters were adorned with different cooking utensils, such as skimmers, dippers, spoons, pots, kettles and pans and this miscellaneous array of tinware was the only thing in the line of ornament of which that side of the cheerless room could boast. On the wall opposite, however, several bright colored pictures were hanging, fastened to the wall by small nails or carpet tacks. One was the familiar advertisement of a certain brand of sarsaparilla; the other, that of a well-known soap; while the remaining one, advertised an oil, or liniment, for the "positive cure of carbuncles, bruises, or burns." But conspicuous above all, as though in the place of honor, was a motto worked in fancy wools, on perforated cardboard, reading: "God Bless Our Home."

And in this wretched abode Helena found Mrs. Hopdyke. No wonder the poor woman had "rheumatiz." The only wonder was that she were living at all. The day being warm, the front door was open, and she was sitting in the doorway in a large Boston rocker—once poor Timothy's chair—her rheumatic ankle bandaged and resting on an ottoman, improvised by putting a pillow on an upturned soap box.

Mrs. Peters was out in the back garden gathering catnip, and Mrs. Timothy sat dozing in her chair in the warm October sunshine. Helena approached unheard. For a few moments she stood in the doorway taking rapid note of the situation in all its crude details, her expression becoming more and more serious. She realized that bad as it was, she saw it at its best, owing to the bright warm day. Mrs. Timothy was woefully changed; her once rugged features were pinched and wan, and she looked so forlorn, so miserable, that a look of deep compassion came to the girl's face, and all thought that she might once have entertained of any little malicious revenge, immediately took flight.

"Poor woman," she murmured; "how old and feeble she looks; how friendless, how deeply in need of sympathy."

Anxious to avoid startling her suddenly, Helena went back a short distance, then returned, stepping heavily on the wooden door step. As she anticipated, Mrs. Hopdyke opened her eyes, and in a moment was wide awake. Helena spoke to her gently, then advancing into the room drew a rickety chair beside her and sat down. When Mrs. Hopdyke had recovered from her surprise on beholding a strange visitor, Helena quietly made herself known. For a moment

the revelation deprived the woman of the power of speech, and almost took away her breath.

"An' so you are really Heleny Channin'!" she exclaimed at last. "Well, if this ain't the biggest surprise I ever had in all my life. I declare, it does beat all how handsome you've growed, an' what a fine lady you have got to be! An' so you got way down to New York city, an' found your mother's folks; well! well! well! Heleny," she continued in a remorseful tone, "I'm 'fraid I used to be a little too hard on you —poor Timothy said I was, an' I guess Timothy was mostly right in everything he said an' done, 'cept spec'latin', an' he would do that in spite of all I could do or say. Poor man, he's lyin' over in the graveyard now, an' I'm left alone, an' friendless, an' penniless—me that worked so hard, an' was so savin', an' ——" The tears rolled down her sunken cheeks, and sobs for a time checked her utterance.

"Heleny, I didn't mean to abuse ye," she continued as soon as she could speak; "but I was one o' them thrifty, drivin' kind, an' I guess I overworked you a little without realizin' it. Timothy said I did. Poor man, he was wonderful fond o' you, an' wonderful cut up when you took yourself off as ye did. He worried about it a good bit; an' up to the very day he died, he was a wishin' to know 'what'd become o' Heleny.' I wish he was here now to see for hisself; he'd be wonderful glad to know how lucky you've been—a good deal more lucky than him or me——"

Again she broke down and sobbed aloud. Her mind went back to the old farm house, so big, and clean, and airy; with its high ceilings, its light-papered walls and grained woodwork, so unlike the smoky

rafters of the miserable shanty where see was now. Timothy was there, alive and well, and Martha was there, and the sewing machine agent was unknown. Thoughts of those days, forever gone, overcame her entirely, and her sobs and moans were pitiful to witness. Greatly affected at the sight of her grief, Helena stepped into the yard, and going around to the side of the house, walked up and down the path among the leafless lilac bushes thinking of Mrs. Timothy's deplorable condition.

"Poor creature!" she mentally exclaimed. "To think that she should come to this. She was not as cruel to me after all as in my childhood I imagined. She never actually struck me, nor was I in any way really harmed. In any event her very treatment was my salvation. Had she been more gentle and considerate, I probably would have remained with her until I was fifteen; and goodness! what an ignorant awkward girl I would have been long before that! A beautiful specimen, indeed, to have presented myself to Mr. Bryan. A great credit I would have been to my dear mother."

On returning to the house Helena found Mrs. Hopdyke drying her eyes with one corner of her white apron.

"Mrs. Hopdyke," she began hesitatingly, "I feel very sorry to find you in such reversed circumstances, and if you will accept a favor from me, I shall be indeed pleased and gratified. You remember the house where my mother and I lived? It stands there vacant, year after year, doing no one any good. It's a rather commodious house, too, very convenient, and exceedingly pleasant; and, if you will, you are at liberty to go there and remain as long as you live, and take Mrs.

Peters with you ; you will need some one, and it will be a blessing to her, I should think, to get away from this rookery. Besides, I understand she has been a very good friend to you, and it will enable you to return in a measure her kindness."

Mrs. Timothy opened her mouth in wonder, but Helena hurriedly proceeded: "The place will want cleaning and some repairs, perhaps ; and here are a few dollars to arrange for all that, also to help you to move and to buy anything necessary. And I will see that you do not want for anything in future."

Surprised and overjoyed at the girl's generosity, her tears fell afresh ; and in the midst of her joyful exclamations, Helena quietly withdrew, and hurrying back to Mrs. Marvin's arrived in time for a late dinner.

"O Missy Bryan!" exclaimed Angevenia delightedly, as she entered the hall, "I do be so glad you've come! Missus her do be so worried 'cause you did be out so long. Her do be walking now from one end of the room to the other ; and her do be looking out at both windows at each end, 'cause her did not know prezactly which way you did be gone. And dinner do be waiting—it do not be supper to-night, it do be a regular dinner, 'cause you do be here."

The next morning Helena returned to New York, feeling somewhat older than she had two days before. Not physically, not mentally ; but she felt that her experiences were widened by the contact and the impressions received during those two days.

On entering her own luxurious home where everything which met her gaze was not only rich and valuable, but which bespoke the refined taste of a connoisseur, from the humblest water color or etching to the

famous masterpieces of art, her mind reverted to that kitchen, parlor, and dining-room all in one, in the old wood-colored shanty, with its blackened old timed tinware, its flaming advertisements and anomalous motto tacked to the whitewashed walls. She looked upon the beautiful carpets, the rugs, and rich lace curtains, a dream in themselves, and thought of that rough bare floor with its stuffed rat holes, its two ugly mats, and the piece of white muslin—once a pillow case—shirred on a string, and fastened across the lower sash of the only window the room contained. She looked at the voluptuous sofas, the chairs and luxurious Turkish lounges scattered about, and thought of the three rickety chairs with their daubs of black paint. And noticing with peculiar interest the many evidences of comfort and elegance which surrounded her and without which she would have barely existed, in contrast to the wretched condition of those two forlorn women with hardly enough to eat and wear and with a dilapidated roof over their heads, she was led to exclaim: "Alas! how little one half the world knows how the other half lives." She might safely have added: "And much less does it care."

"I am glad I went," she soliloquized. "Otherwise I would not have realized that such places exist; and my going will not have been in vain. My experience shall be the means of bringing some comfort, and, I trust, happiness, to more than Mrs. Hopdyke. Besides, I suppose, it is well to know something of the other side of life, and just such an experience was necessary to open my eyes and arouse my sleeping sympathies."

The girl's ideas of life were limited to that phase of it where almost every wish was gratified; and that

hovel home had seemed to her the very depth of poverty and degradation. And yet, right in her own city, almost (as Mrs. Hopdyke's successor would have tersely put it) "within gunshot" of her home, were far darker phases of life, of whose existence she had vaguely heard from some of her friends who had been through the slums; and which, by comparison, would have made the "shanty around the bend" seem a sort of paradise. Had she walked on a hot day, or a cool one either for that matter, on Essex Street or Ludlow, between Grand Street and Canal, and only traversed the one block, her contracted ideas of the "other side" of life would have immediately expanded.

I took that walk one day, with my eyes wide open in wonder and loathing. But no matter how great my astonishment, it was compulsory, from a healthful standpoint, that my mouth be kept securely closed, and my nostrils too. And yet, the human mass residing there, thick as swarming flies, live, and thrive; and, as if their one ambition were the propagation of the species, devote all their energies to reproducing themselves. They live in a world of their own, as little affected by outside influences as if removed from them by thousands of miles. And yet, some of them apparently enjoy life, because, I suppose, they have no conception of anything better—of anything beyond—happy in their ignorance, and in their squalor.

Perhaps for them it is better so. They cannot improve their condition while the social order is in the hands of the rich, and wealth is the basis of power. Discontent is the keynote of progress; but the unhappy condition of the poor would only be accentuated by a proper realization of their misery, and happi-

ness, after all, may not depend so much on where we are, or what our surroundings, as it may on what our education and past associations have been.

As soon as the necessary formalities were attended to, the long standing Channing account in the Saxtontown bank was closed, and eight of the sixteen hundred dollars surprised and gladdened Mrs. Timothy Hopdyke's lonely heart and brought to her many a comfort long unknown ; and to Mrs. Peters as well—the good Samaritan in her distress, for like the widow of olden time, she had divided the "last morsel of meal" with her friend.

The same mail which took the registered money package to Mrs. Hopdyke, took to her successor in the old farm house the much-coveted pattern, which was to assist her in eclipsing the "Widder Caper."

A few weeks later a portion of the remaining eight hundred dollars was invested in lumber and shingles to complete a new home in the far west where the Rudens lived. Mrs. Ruden also bought a new dress for herself, a new cloak for Annie, paid the last installment on her sewing machine, and still was enabled to put the larger part of the eight hundred dollars aside for a "rainy day."

"What a Godsend it is to us John, isn't it?" Mrs. Ruden said to her husband in a grateful tone, and with kindly remembrance of the child entertained under their roof like an "angel unawares." "Yes, she resumed, "it couldn't have come in a better time ; right when we are so cramped for money, and a cold winter coming on, and the house not finished. I declare, it's like 'bread cast on the waters, returning after many days' with a vengeance, isn't it? But who would have

thought such luck was in store for that little Helena —what was her other name John? She only speaks of herself as the little Helena, whom we so kindly cared for, and signs 'Helena Bryan.' But that was not her name then."

"I don't remember, Lucy; I never was good at remembering names," returned Mr. Ruden, "and I never thought of her except as 'little Helena.' But," he added earnestly, "I shall never forget her. I took to her somehow as I never took to any other child except Annie."

CHAPTER XXI.

IT was just half past seven by the clock on the mantel in Helena's boudoir on the Tuesday evening that Mrs. Marvin had requested her son to call on Miss Bryan at eight. Having finished dinner, Helena returned to her room and was rather curiously, perhaps impatiently, awaiting the time. "Only one half hour longer," she mused, "and then I shall see Billy again." Suddenly the outside bell rang, and a moment later a servant announced that a young gentleman was down stairs wishing to see her.

"He didn't give any card, nor any name," said the servant, "and he wouldn't go in the parlor: so he's waiting in the hall."

With a slight uplifting of her brows Helena began descending the stairs, secretly wondering why he had called so far in advance of the time specified. But on the very last step she paused; an indescribable feeling

taking possession of her. Her guest was not seated in the reception chair, but stood leaning with his back against the door, his hat in one hand, and his cane (the latter with the inevitable crook) in the other. His hair was parted in the middle, and carefully brushed; his mustache skilfully waxed and pointed. A silk handkerchief, elaborately embroidered in colored silks, stuck jauntily out of his pocket, while a large yellow chrysanthemum adorned the lapel of his coat, and a heavy perfume, which evidently emanated from his exquisite person filled the room. On seeing Helena hesitate, he stepped forward with a sweeping bow.

"Have I the pleasure of addressing Miss Bryan?" he asked.

"I am Miss Bryan," she said in a low voice.

"Ah! I have called at my mother's request to see you this evening," he said, "and—er—I assure you, Miss Bryan, I feel highly honored—in—having been thus commissioned."

"Yes, I know; I was expecting you," she replied hurriedly. "Please come in and sit down." And in a dazed sort of way she preceded him into the drawing-room, he following with a swaggering air.

"So my mother wrote you that I would call?" he said interrogatively.

"No; but she told me so when I saw her."

"O indeed. She mentioned having met you, and was much pleased in having made your acquaintance. Ah! Really this is comfort!" he said with a broad smile, as he sank nearly out of sight in a big stuffed chair, and began to gaze admiringly about. "But really," he resumed, tugging at a heavy gold watch chain, "I only intended to call for a moment, just to

please mother, as I had a pressing engagement down the Avenue. But your kind invitation, Miss Bryan, to come in was too tempting to be resisted, so here I am and I am very glad, I am sure "—giving her a meaning look—" that I was persuaded to come."

Helena made no reply. A dumb feeling lay at her heart. It seemed almost incredible that the ideal of her life had developed into this swaggering, superficial would-be dude. Everything he said appeared meaningless, and she could scarcely find voice to converse with him, such a revulsion had taken place within her with the sudden awakening from her long dream. Observing her abstracted manner, and beginning to feel that he had already worn out his welcome and was not properly appreciated, he made a move as though to go. But thinking of his mother, she made an effort for her sake, to treat him at least civily—she could not for the life of her do more. She realized that even a friendship (purely for the mother's sake) between herself and this conceited individual would be impossible.

With a vain attempt at a friendly smile, she said: " Do not be in a hurry. I—that is—your mother and I, are such very good friends, that I had hoped you ——"

She stopped abruptly, unable to add another word, or to make her meaning clear. Her cheeks had flushed; she felt quite unlike herself. His very look —a look intended to be effective—had produced an entirely different result, and aroused a feeling of prejudice and dislike.

Perhaps her prejudice was ungrounded—unwarranted. It was not so much because of anything he

had said or done, as it was that he was *not* what she had expected him to be; and she could not forgive him for so cruelly disappointing her. Having formed this impression she could discover in him no redeeming qualities, and his every act, his every word, only prejudiced her the more.

Again he leaned back in his chair. "I am delighted, really," he began, "to know of the friendship existing between you and my mother. I never knew of it until quite recently; in brief, I don't remember of her ever speaking of you until within the past few days—so strange too," and he bestowed upon her another of his languishing glances. "How long have you known my mother, Miss Bryan?"

"I have known her for a long time; I cannot just say how long," she replied nervously, heartily hoping that he had forgotten Helena Channing.

"Ah yes," she thought with almost a gasp, "I sincerely hope he has forgotten that moonlight night, and the kiss he gave me. It would almost seem like sacrilege for *him*, as he is now, to remember it. And I wish, oh! how I wish, that he might never know who I am. But that is out of the question—his mother will tell him if I do not. Well, she may—I cannot."

"It seems to me very odd, don't you know," he resumed, "that having known my mother so long, that she has never spoken of you to me before. But you remember the old saying, Miss Bryan, 'better late than never'; and I trust," he proceeded with a bow and a smile, "that a little, if only a very little of the friendship you feel for her, may be extended to her only son."

His affectation was offensively familiar; but she struggled hard to conceal her disgust in the thought that this would be his last and only call. In her heart she was longing to have him go; she wanted to be alone and in silence mourn over the mere ashes of her dead.

"Has my mother ever mentioned me to you, Miss Bryan?" he asked abruptly.

"O yes," she returned quietly. "I have heard her speak of you a number of times."

"I suppose," he resumed good-naturedly, "that like all fond and doting mothers, she is wonderfully wrapped up in me with all my faults."

Helena remembered Mrs. Marvin's feelings on that subject, and how she had said: "My son is in every way worthy of my affection." "Well," she thought, "she is his mother—I am not. She cannot see his faults—I can. To her, his manners may seem perfect; but to me, his lack of culture, and his glaring vulgarity is painfully evident."

"Now, Miss Bryan," he said, fumbling through his pockets first one then the other, "I think I'll speak of that little matter that mother requested me to mention, before I forget it. But really! why, really, this is strange! I cannot find the paper. I was sure I had it with me; but I must have left it at home after all. And in that case," he continued with a bland smile, "I shall be compelled to call again—a great pleasure to me, I assure you, and, I trust, agreeable to you as well?"

"What paper do you refer to, Mr. Marvin?" she asked wonderingly.

With a quick look of surprise, he said briskly: "I

came away in such a hurry this evening that I also forgot my cards, and you appear to have gotten my name wrong; and yet, knowing my mother, you surely know me—er—that is, my name."

She looked at him blankly, as though not comprehending. "Gotten your name wrong?" she repeated. "Is not your name ——"

"My name is Higley—Myron Higley, at your service. Surely, Miss Bryan, you are not mistaken in ——"

The blank look had vanished; her face lighted, and with another revulsion of feeling she laughed outright, nervously, almost hysterically.

"Pardon me," she said, "but I have made such a stupid blunder. My friend, Mrs. Marvin, has also requested her son to call this evening at this hour, and the two cases being so identical in many respects, that naturally I took it for granted you were he and ——"

"O yes, I see," he interrupted with a loud laugh. "That's a good joke on—er—me. Quite a natural inference, indeed! Well, I called in regard to that petition for the—er—well, I believe the upshot of it all is, it's the 'New Woman Movement,' or something of the sort. Really, I suppose, I ought to be ashamed to admit it, but I have not yet read the petition through, so I am not very well posted. My mother wrote it, though; I know that much. Mother is a very capable woman," he proceeded with a glow of pride, "and very public-spirited. She is all enthusiasm over the coming election, and is very anxious to secure your signature to the petition. She would have called herself, but owing to the pressure on hand just

now, she has deputized me to relieve her to a certain extent!"

As Mr. Higley, he suddenly rose several degrees in Helena's estimation, and she decided, that when he became older, wiser, and less egotistical, he might be a very nice young man after all.

"His mother is certainly a lady," she mused; "and how a son of hers, any more than a son of Mrs. Marvin, could turn out to be otherwise than a gentleman, would be incomprehensible."

Mrs. Higley, the mother of this hereditary phenomenon, was a rather strong-minded woman, and very pronounced in her convictions and opinions. She belonged to several well-known organizations throughout the city, political and otherwise, and was a prominent member of the "Woman's Press Club," where Helena had met her only two weeks before, at one of their Saturday afternoon teas. Helena, of course, was not a member of that well-known literary club, but she was there by invitation as the guest of the presiding club hostess; and, having been introduced to Mrs. Higley, after a little friendly chat, that very enterprising woman straightway broached the subject of "Woman Suffrage," her pet hobby. Helena's affable promise to consider the matter, accounted for young Higley's untimely call.

A little ormolu clock in the extension struck eight. "It is unfortunate that you forgot the paper," she began hurriedly; "but if you will call again I shall be pleased to read it through and—perhaps to sign it. Now, if you will please excuse me—I—have an appointment and ——"

"O certainly, certainly; pray don't mention it, and

pardon me for detaining you so long; and be assured I shall be most happy to call again."

With a low bow, and a hasty "good evening," he took leave, and Helena went quickly to her room.

"What a mistake!" she exclaimed. "What a rude digression in my dream!" Then she laughed quietly in retrospection of the last half hour. "That would indeed have been quite another side to my little romance," she muttered. "A side that I have never for one moment considered. No; it has never occurred to me that Billy could be anything other than I have always pictured him—the handsome boy, developed into the more handsome and manly man. But suppose I am all wrong?" She glanced uneasily at the clock. "Ten minutes past eight! Suppose he does not come?"

Again the outside bell rang, and soon a card was handed her with the inscription: "Mr. William Olney Marvin." He had really come at last. The knowledge caused her breath to come fast, but with apparent composure she again descended the stairs.

As she entered the drawing-room he rose. She gave him a quick glance, then advancing, offered her hand in friendly welcome. She felt at once that *he* was not disappointing—he was all she had imagined him to be, fine looking, dignified, and courteous. His dress was quiet, and in perfect taste; no ostentation either in that, or in his manner.

Any trepidation she may have felt when he was announced subsided; she was perfectly at ease.

"I am very glad you called, Mr. Marvin," she said frankly, "for I am the bearer of several messages from

your mother, whom I had the pleasure of meeting while in Clydesville."

Then they sat down, chatting friendlily, like old acquaintances. There was no effort on either side; no affected meaningless remarks, uttered simply for the sake of saying something and to prevent the embarrassment of sitting in awkward silence.

"Did you call on my mother while in Clydesville?" he asked.

"O yes," she returned quickly; "and I had such a pleasant time. Your mother and I became very good friends."

"Whom do you visit in Clydesville, Miss Bryan? Pardon my inquisitiveness," he added in the same breath, "but Clydesville is my old home you know, and knowing everyone there, I am naturally interested."

"My friends—that is, those whom I went expressly to see are not there now. They ——"

"O yes, I know," he interrupted confidently. "You were visiting the Culvertons. My mother wrote me some time ago that a lady from New York was visiting them, but she did not mention the name; and in her last letter referring to you, it did not occur to me that you were the same person."

Helena made no reply. He had unconsciously provided her a way of escape, and she gratefully accepted it by remaining silent, leaving him for the time to his own inference. She had never seen the Culvertons; they had not lived in Clydesville when she had lived there, but during her recent visit she had heard just enough about them from Mrs. Marvin to enable her

to carry on the little ruse without implicating herself.

"Mrs. Culverton is still in very delicate health, I understand," said Mr. Marvin after a moment's pause.

"Yes," returned Helena; "and that is the reason for their going to Bermuda for the winter. This climate is too cold and too changeable for her."

"I fear she has consumption," he remarked. "She looked very ill the last time I saw her, and I think her recovery is doubtful. It seems very sad too; she is such a lovely woman, and so much needed in her family."

"Yes, it is sad indeed," said Helena quietly.

"And her son—Jack Culverton," continued Mr. Marvin, "is a splendid fellow. He is about my own age, and we are the best of friends."

Helena made no reply.

"By the way," Mr. Marvin proceeded, "I have invited Jack to stop in New York on his return from Bermuda, and be my guest for a week. He has no acquaintances in town, I believe, other than you and myself, Miss Bryan; nevertheless I think he could put in a week very pleasantly."

"Yes, very likely he could," was the careless reply. And yet something in her tone caused young Marvin to give her a quick look.

Despite Helena's supposed friendship for the Culvertons, and the fact of her having been their guest when in Clydesville, she made no further comment regarding Jack Culverton's prospective visit, and her reticence on the subject, and her somewhat reserved manner concerning him, was wrongly interpreted

and led Mr. Marvin to form a conclusion which would have annoyed her very much had she known, and would have caused her to adopt a different line of action at once. But not suspecting his "conclusion," and being fearful lest something be said which would put her limited knowledge of the Culverton family to the test and betray the little ruse, she skilfully changed the subject, leaving him firmly impressed with the idea that the Culvertons were the people whom she visited in Clydesville, and while there had incidentally became acquainted with his mother, and that she was particularly interested in Mr. Jack Culverton. After a few moments silence the conversation became general. They discussed current topics, the theatre, and the most popular plays on the boards, and finally referred to the latest novel.

"I have not read it yet," he said, "so I can only speak of it from hearsay."

"You are not quite up-to-date," she said laughing. "Nowadays everybody must read the latest novel, you know, if only to say they have read it, and particularly one that has made such a sensation as this one."

"Yes, I suppose I am somewhat behind the times," he replied good-humoredly. "But all my leisure moments of late have been devoted to reading up problems of public interest. I am making a study of Political Economy, and have just finished reading a lengthy treatise on ——"

"The financial problem, I suppose!" she interrupted brightly. "You are not going to be a New York politician though, I hope."

"Well, certainly not one of the *stripe* you evidently have in mind," he replied with a quiet smile.

"You refer to the 'Tammany tiger,' I suppose. Well, I must say I was not half as sorry to hear of the death of that tiger as I was of the death of poor old Tip, the Central Park elephant, that was so scientifically (?) yet so cruelly poisoned a year or two ago."

"Yes, I remember the event quite well," returned Mr. Marvin. "Poor Tip had thousands of sympathizers who were greatly relieved when they knew his sufferings were ended. His hide was mounted in the Museum of Natural History a short time ago, and makes quite an interesting exhibition. But so far as the 'Tammany tiger' is concerned, Miss Bryan, it would take more cyanide of potassium than was given to Tip to kill him, for his vitality is something wonderful, and his recuperative powers quite surpass those of any other known animal."

The conversation drifted to other subjects, and by degrees to the latest bits of society gossip.

"I think," he said laughing, "that you will find me no more up-to-date in society news than in my knowledge of the latest novel. To be frank, I am somewhat of a stranger to society."

"I wish I were!" she exclaimed so impulsively, so artlessly, that he was thoroughly amused.

"I would suppose, Miss Bryan, that you would consider yourself fortunate in being in society," he returned. "Of course, with me it is different. My time is so taken up with business that I have but little leisure. Not that I am completely isolated, however; I have my business acquaintances, many of whom are very desirable friends, and at whose homes I am

occasionally most agreeably entertained. Still, I find time to do some reading, and endeavor to keep abreast of the times, although," he added facetiously, "I am not equal to discussing the latest society event, or that much talked about novel."

"You are fortunate indeed," she said, "to be able to read as much as you do. It quite surpasses any attempt of mine in that direction. By the way, how do you imagine the greater part of my time has been employed during the last two years?"

"That is a rather difficult question, and one quite out of my province to answer," he said, a humorous expression lighting his grey eyes.

"Well, I will tell you," she proceeded with a frankness which charmed him. "It has been devoted to an ambition to outdo somebody else in the way of dress. A very noble ambition, was it not?" she asked in a slightly sarcastic tone.

Had his thoughts been spoken he would have replied that her efforts in that direction had not been in vain, judging from her present appearance. But he doubted her assertion. A girl with a face like hers, so earnest, so expressive of kindly feeling and noble impulse, could never be simply a devotee of fashion and nothing more.

Aloud he said: "Miss Bryan, I am sure that remark is very unjust to yourself and that no one else would think of saying such a thing about you."

At ten o'clock he rose to go. "I have passed a very delightful evening," he said, "although I had no intention of remaining so long when I came."

His words reminded her of the pseudo Mr. Marvin; he had made some remark to the same effect, and the

remembrance caused her to smile. Then she told him of Mr. Higley's call, the rather odd coincidence of both coming at their mother's request, and of her mistaking Mr. Higley for him. They both laughed over the occurrence, considering it a rather amusing and interesting blunder. Then he bade her good-night.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE next day's mail bore to Mrs. Marvin a letter in which Helena wrote: "Your son called last evening, and we had a very pleasant visit; but I have nothing of interest to write you concerning it, inasmuch as I did not let him know who I really was. You will be surprised at this, I know, but I have a little scheme in connection with my changed identity, which I am eager to carry out. So let me request that you do not betray me to him until you hear from me further on the subject. I am sure, dear Mrs. Marvin, that I may rely on your friendship and secrecy in this matter."

The days passed; a week came and went, and Mr. Marvin had not repeated his call. Helena had felt when he left her that he would surely come again soon, as he had received a cordial invitation to do so, and she had requested that he would not be at all formal, but would consider himself as one of their friends. But he had not availed himself of her invitation.

"What can it mean?" she questioned. "What if he never comes again? He seemed to enjoy himself, and I rather thought he liked me; why then does he stay away?"

On the tenth day she impulsively wrote him a note reading:

"DEAR MR. MARVIN:—My father has secured theatre tickets for this evening's performance of 'As You Like It,' with Julia Marlowe playing 'Rosalind'; and thinking perhaps you would like to see the play, I shall be pleased to have you join our party.

Very truly yours,

HELENA J. BRYAN."

All the afternoon she waited in vain for some word of reply, but none came. "Is it possible he will disappoint me?" she thought. "If he does, what excuse can he offer for such rudeness?"

As the day passed and evening came on, she became strangely depressed, and lost all interest in the prospective entertainment to which she had looked forward with such pleasure. Several other friends arrived, making it compulsory for her to conceal her disappointment. But at the last moment, just as they were about to start without him, Mr. Marvin was announced.

In expressing regret for having kept them waiting, he said: "Miss Bryan, I only received your note about an hour ago, or I would have replied at once. As it is, I had all I could do to get here myself."

She accepted his apology graciously, and when he expressed thanks for her kind remembrance of him, she felt tempted to reply that she was about convinced that he had forgotten her.

During the play that evening, Helena inadvertently began to sympathize with Orlando in his hopeless infatuation for Rosalind, and to compare the disguised

Rosalind in her callous treatment of her lover, to young Marvin, and her own treatment of him. But Rosalind knew Orlando loved her and, woman-like, she enjoyed his suffering, knowing she was sure of him.

"If I only knew that my 'Orlando' loved me," she thought, "I would not treat him so, nor would I subject him for one hour to such cruel suspense."

She could barely suppress a sigh, and glancing up detected Mr. Marvin's careless smile while listening to Orlando's love-sick vaporings. Seeing he was observed, he humorously whispered:

"Orlando has lost his head, like the most of lovers, and that is Rosalind's opportunity to keep him on the rack. If she doubted his love for her, she would lose no time in telling him who she was. Poor Orlando! another victim to a woman's caprice."

Helena made no reply; she appeared deeply interested in the comedy on the stage; nevertheless she was somewhat startled by his significant remark.

"Can it be possible he knows who I am, and is waiting to make sure of my love for him before he tells me of his love for me? No," she thought, a feeling of uneasiness forcing itself upon her, "it is not that; men in love wait for nothing. Can it be possible, then, he is in love with some other woman? But no! I'll not think of it; why should I make myself miserable without sufficient cause?"

Several times during the evening while chatting between the acts, Helena was half-tempted to tell him who she was, and watch the impression her disclosure made. But she resisted the temptation.

"No; not yet," she thought. "The time has not

come; and that revelation must be made when we are alone."

When parting from him that night she said lightly: "Now, remember, Mr. Marvin, I promised your mother to include you in my list of friends; and as society has no claim on your time, why, please bear in mind that you are welcome whenever you can make it convenient to come. Almost every evening a few of my friends drop in, and I am sure you would find them agreeable and pleasant to meet."

He thanked her warmly for her kindness and remarked that he would be only too happy to avail himself of her invitation.

On reaching her room she exclaimed softly to herself: "Yes, I love him, I love him dearly; and not merely because of my childish and life-long affection for the boy, but for the man. He is all that I have hoped he would be. And," she added, as though in confidence to herself, "we belong to each other. Nothing can alter that fact."

Within a few evenings he called again, remaining an hour or so, but several other of her acquaintances being present, she had no opportunity for any conversation with him except in a general way. For the next few days she was exceedingly light-hearted; but as the time again wore on, and she neither saw or heard one word from him, she grew expectant and restless.

"Why does he treat me so?" she questioned. "Is it because he is indifferent to me? Can I not arouse in him even a feeling of friendship? Am I nothing to him whatever?" She impatiently walked the length of the room. "Will he never come to me of his own accord?" she asked. "Must I continually invent some

excuse to bring him?—else let him stay away. Under no other circumstances would I exert myself. I should be the one sought—not he; but I have devoted my thoughts almost exclusively to him; have made him my ideal, my hero! And now I cannot give him up without knowing positively that he is indifferent to me, and can never be otherwise. If I knew he were—knew he would never care for me, then I would try to forget him. But I felt so sure he was at least interested in me; his very expression seemed to indicate that; but this sudden change I cannot account for."

The following morning she received a long letter from Mrs. Marvin, and eagerly grasped at that as a fortunate means of seeing him again. One hour later a note was dropped in the mail box which read:

"DEAR MR. MARVIN:—I have just received a long letter from your mother which I know will interest you, and you must be sure to come up to dine with us, and spend the evening.

Most cordially yours,

HELENA J. BRYAN."

"I don't know what he will think of me," she muttered with flushed cheeks. "I fear he will almost think I am forcing him to come. It is humiliating indeed; but what can I do? What other move can I make?"

During the afternoon she received an answer from him by messenger, expressing regret in being unable to dine with them, but stating that he would be pleased to call later in the evening.

"Why can he not come to dine?" she thought won-

deringly. "Who can have any claim on him at that hour?"

When he arrived his mother's letter was made the absorbing topic of conversation. "Your mother writes that your father's affairs in London are being very satisfactorily settled," said Helena, "and she requested me to tell you so in case I saw you before she wrote, that is why I sent for you so peremptorily. Your mother also writes that Angevenia has been very ill, and for two days they thought she would die; but she is now much better. By the way, Angevenia is, without exception, the queerest specimen of humanity I ever saw. Have you ever seen her, Mr. Marvin?"

"O yes; she was with my mother the last time I was home. Poor little Angevenia!" he muttered in a sympathetic voice.

"What is her other name?" Helena asked.

"I don't know that she has any other," he replied; "in fact the one seems quite name enough."

"Who were her parents?" Helena continued curiously, thinking it just possible she may have heard of them during her childhood.

"I do not know who her father was," he said; "nor do I know her mother's last name. Everybody calls her by her first name, which is 'Nancy.'"

"Miss Nancy?" asked Helena unguardedly, and in evident surprise.

"I believe they do call her Miss Nancy," he returned evasively.

"When in Clydesville I heard your mother speak of her as a strange character," said Helena, in explanation of her apparent interest in the woman; "but she did not say she was Angevenia's mother. Tell me

something of the girl, Mr. Marvin. She amused me wonderfully when I was there, with her strange forms of speech—her 'I do be's,' and, 'her do be's,' to say nothing of her elfish looks and fly-away manner."

"I feel a great sympathy for the poor child," replied Mr. Marvin quietly. "I call her 'child,' in spite of her seventeen or eighteen years, for she is nothing more, and never will be. It seems that soon after her unfortunate birth, her mother became insane, and at times imagined the child to be a huge rat, which she desired to strangle; and she actually would have killed it, had not the neighbors taken it from her. So the poor little thing was toted about from pillar to post, cared for a few days here and a few days there, until it was consigned to the county house, where it remained until a year or so ago, when a man named Hoggins took the child to his home to assist his wife, who had broken her arm. But Hoggins is an ignorant, meddling sort of man, who tries to rule the house as well as attend to his own business; and he made it so disagreeable with his continual wrangling that directly Mrs. Hoggins' arm was better, Angevenia wanted to leave, preferring to return to the county house to remaining there. But my mother took her, more, I believe, from sympathy than otherwise."

"And the girl's mother?" continued Helena. "When she recovered from her insanity did she not want her child?"

"I believe on that subject she has never been quite rational. She is sane enough on other subjects, but has always repudiated her child—disclaiming all knowledge of it. She has an actual abhorrence of it; an

uncanny sort of fear; as if it were in reality a monstrous rat."

"How strange," thought Helena, "that Mrs. Marvin did not tell me anything of this." Then for a moment her mind went back to her home in Clydesville, where Miss Nancy used to come regularly three times a week. She well remembered the woman's extreme kindness to her, and how on baking days she always made her a little pie, or a "turn-over;" and knowing her fondness for animals, she usually managed to have a piece of pie crust left, from which to cut out an animal of some sort, generally a cat, or a pig.

Helena also remembered that on one occassion, while rolling out the crust, she had muttered to herself in a wild fashion, then with a loud laugh had shaped the crust into a big rat.

"I'll bake it," she said gleefully, "and you shall eat it up, and then it can't haunt me any more."

Helena understood the significance now of her strange words and actions. "And at that very time," she thought, "her own child was in the poor house, living on poor house fare."

"Mr. Marvin," she said abruptly, "I did not know poor Angevenia's history, or I would have felt very differently toward her. I looked upon her more as an object of amusement, than otherwise; and now, since knowing her unfortunate story, I must admit I feel somewhat remorseful."

Then they conversed on other subjects, both in the best of spirits, and yet she could not help but think: "Directly he is gone, I shall pass from his mind and be forgotten."

When he rose to go, she said lightly: "Now, Mr. Marvin, don't forget to come again."

"O no," he returned pleasantly; "my memory is not so defective as that. By the way that reminds me of a case of defective memory I ran across this morning which was rather extraordinary. But I'll not detain you to-night to relate it, so pardon me for having mentioned it at all."

"Now you have aroused my curiosity," she answered laughing, "and I think I shall insist upon hearing about it. Besides it is not late, so please be seated again and tell me."

"I don't know that it will particularly interest you," he replied, "but you can decide that question better after hearing the story. I was in the Tombs police court this morning, waiting for a lawyer to be disengaged with whom I had a small business matter, when a case of highway robbery was called. The prisoner was a young fellow of some twenty-two or three years, and his dialect indicated him to be a regular 'tough'; but he looked so forlorn and hopeless, that he aroused my interest. When asked to give his name he turned red in the face, and hung his head, but did not answer.

"'Tell your name,' said the judge sternly. The fellow appeared confused, but still made no reply. He was ordered the third time to give his name, then in desperation exclaimed: "Youse won't b'lieve a t'ing I says, Jedge, an' I might as well save me breat'. But, yer Honor, sure's I's a standin' 'ere, I'se forgot it—it's clean gone frum me min'. See?'

"'Forgotten your name?' roared the judge.

"'Yes, yer Honor, I'se forgot me name. I ain't t'ought of it fur ages. But let me t'ink a minute.'

"'What name did you give the sergeant at the station house when you were arrested?' asked the Court.

"'Say, yer Honor, I didn't give none, an' dey put me in de book fur John Doe. See?'

"Everybody in the room laughed except the judge, who looked unusually stern. Evidently no one believed the fellow, although he did not appear to be obstinate, but dazed, or 'rattled,' as some of them expressed it. Suddenly he leaned forward:

"'Say, Jedge,' said he, 'me name's come back ter me all of a suddint—it's Mike Finnerty, yer Honor.' Then the fellow protested his innocence in vehement terms, and for a person in his sphere of life he seemed wonderfully sensitive and cut up over his arrest. The Court made some scathing remarks, and the prisoner, forgetting their distinctive positions, in a desperate tone exclaimed:

"'Jedge, yer Honor, I tell yez wot, I niver stoled it! I ain't a settin' meself up fur no peach, but I's givin' it to yer straight, Jedge, fur wid all me faults I ain't no t'ief. See? W'y yer Honor, w'en I wuz notin' but er kid I niver pinched even a tater from de grocery, an' I'se had t'ousan's o' chances, too. De gang useter hoot at me, an' call me er jay, an' er softy, an' er chump, 'cause I didn' catch on; an' say, Jedge, de las' mentioned name has stuck ter me till dis day, an' I disremember w'en I wuz called anyt'ing 'cept Mickey de chump, an' dat's w'y, yer Honor, I forgot me real name. See?'"

Helena uttered no exclamation of surprise, but that

name affected her nevertheless, and caused startling events of the past to recur to her mind.

"Where does he live, Mr. Marvin?" she asked quietly.

"I cannot exactly say, but it was on West Street, down town along the wharves somewhere, I believe."

"Yes," she thought, "it must be he—the very boy who fought to recover my jewel case, then conducted me to father's office, where he was called a rascal, and almost kicked out by the janitor for his pains. And alas! that is the only recompense he has ever received for his kindness."

"What was the result of the trial, Mr. Marvin?—was he found guilty?"

"The policeman swore he was the thief, and the Court held him for the grand jury."

"Where is he now?"

"In the Tombs, I believe."

That night Helena was restless and unable to sleep. Recollections of that hot August day twelve years before when she was lost in West Street near Vestry, haunted her. She remembered that odious wolfish girl, called "Moll de rat," and how she was befriended by that dirt begrimed boy called "Mikey de chump." Only for him, she would have lost the letter to Mr. Bryan, and in that case Mr. Bryan might have taken no particular interest in her even had she succeeded in reaching him, which indeed seemed doubtful when she remembered the officer's intention of handing her over to the Gerry Society.

Having so generously remunerated the Rudens, Helena had considered her obligation ended; but she realized now as never before that she was under great

obligation to that wretched boy of the slums, to whom she had scarcely ever given a thought.

"Nor have I ever done the slightest thing," she admitted with a tinge of remorse, "to show him my appreciation for so nobly defending me."

There in her own home surrounded by every luxury, it seemed hardly credible that she had really been among those people and escaped unharmed. The mere memory was dreadful enough, but what troubled her particularly, was the thought of that overgrown boy—developed physically, but not mentally; a human being possessing the elements of a noble character, left to grow up like a weed amid most deplorable conditions, untaught, uncared for, almost uncivilized, and now lying in the Tombs awaiting trial.

"If he is innocent I must save him," she exclaimed. "He saved me from—Heavens knows what! and perhaps he has not a friend in all the world."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE next day was an epoch in Helena's life. She witnessed phases of the "other side" which haunted her for many a day afterward. At ten o'clock in the morning, clad in a plain close-fitting cloth gown, she presented herself at the well-known building of "Charities and Corrections," on the corner of Eleventh Street and Third Avenue, and there among the crowd of poverty stricken and wretched specimens of humanity, awaited her turn to approach the complais-

ant faced, and rather portly man at the desk, who graciously gives the permits to visit the public institutions on Wards and Blackwell's Island and the city prison. Some wanted a permit to enter Charity Hospital as a patient, others wanted to see friends "on the Island." One timid faced woman on approaching the desk stood mute, as though too bewildered and frightened to speak.

"Well, what is it?" asked the complaisant faced man in power.

"Please sir, will you give me a paper to go to the Insane Asylum on Wards Island?" she asked in a quavering voice.

"What's that?—speak up louder."

The request was repeated in more frightened tones than before. Evidently the man's voice was not as reassuring as his face.

"What do you want to go to the Insane Asylum for?" he asked.

"Please sir, I want to see how John Watkins is—him that was sent there a year or so ago."

"What good will it do John Watkins for you to know how he is?" the man asked in a slightly sarcastic tone.

"There's a man down town, sir, that used to know John, and he says that when John dies he'll see him buried proper, and not leave him for the doctors to cut up. And so, sir, I want to go up and see John, and tell the doctors there that when John dies to save him, and let the man down town know."

"Humph!" grunted the complaisant faced man. Then he stuck his pen behind his ear and in a brusque voice said: "My good woman, you tell the 'man

down town' that if he is so interested in John he had better send him a barrel of oranges, or something else that he would like, and never mind just now about his dead body. Next?"

The woman slunk away as if she had received a severe reprimand, and Helena being "next," stepped into her place.

"Well?"

"I would like a permit to visit the Tombs to see Mike Finnerty," she said in a low tone.

"Is Mike Finnerty a relative of yours?"

"No sir."

He looked up, gave her a peculiar searching glance then without a word wrote out the permit. A half hour later Helena stood in the long procession waiting to be admitted to the Tombs. When once within the gates came the searching process, but as no razor, knife or poison could be found about her, she was permitted to pass.

Michael Finnerty was sitting on a cot in a narrow whitewashed cell, feeling disconsolate enough. It was one of the surprises of his life to find that the lady, looking so compassionately upon him through the iron bars, had come expressly to see him. The "angel of the Tombs" had been there the day before, and had spoken to him kindly, but she only came in a general way and not for his sake alone. At first he appeared embarrassed and ill at ease, but Helena's sympathetic manner, and sincere interest in his case, soon dispelled his embarrassment and he told his story. "Lady, if I'd a stoled it," he said in conclusion, "den I'd stan' de bein' nipped widout squealin'; but I didn't. See? I wuz jus' goin' 'long 'bout me own biz, w'en all of a

suddint de cop hollered 'stop,' an' a cove comed runnin' pas' me like greased lightnin', an' w'en 'e seed de cop onter 'im, 'e dropped de swag, an' skipped roun' de corner, an' den I picked it up jus' as de cop comed up an' collared me. An' lady, dat same cop 'e's got er grudge agin me, an' 'e's glad 'nough fur de chance o' nippin' me ter git square. An' lady, ivery word I'se tol' ye's as true as preachin'. See?"

Helena believed him; she knew he was the Mikey of old; very much changed, but not beyond recognition, especially when looking for a resemblance.

"I wouldn't min' so much, lady, if 'twasn't fur Pete," he continued; "it's fur 'im I min'. See?"

"Who is Pete?" she asked.

"'E's me brudder. Patsey an' Tim's gone ter sea, an' me an Pete's all dere's left; de ol' folks passed in der checks years 'go, an' Pete 'e's sickly an' can't do much, an' 'e sticks ter me, an' I looks after 'im."

"If you were at liberty, and had money enough to start you in something, what would you do?" Helena asked.

"Say, lady, dats a rattler, an' no mistake, see? But if me an' Pete owned a oyster sloop, I t'inks 'im an' me'd pull togedder an' do a good bit at oyster dredgin'."

That evening Helena related her adventures to Mr. Bryan, and succeeded in arousing his interest, particularly after hearing the whole story. "He is the identical boy who befriended me that awful day," she said, "the proof is positive. This morning he spoke of his brothers, Patsy, Tim, and Pete, and I remember of that boy of the slums referring to those same brothers. Now father," she said coaxingly, "if that

little lawyer of yours wishes to redeem himself in my estimation, let him do so by securing this poor fellow's acquittal."

The next week Michael Finnerty was discharged; and to-day he and Pete are among the most successful oystermen along the coast. But never have they been able to solve the mystery surrounding the boat of which they are so proud. They merely know it is theirs; that it was awaiting them when Mikey was discharged from the Tombs. Mikey, has a strong suspicion however, that "de swell lady" who visited him while there, is chiefly concerned in his good fortune. But who she is, or how she came to interest herself in his case he will probably never know.

Too soon Helena began to realize that her fears concerning young Marvin were prophetic, and that he had indeed forgotten her. Day after day sped by and still he did not come. Two weeks passed, and she had not even heard from him.

"There is nothing more I can do!" she cried in despair. "I have no letter from his mother to offer as an excuse for sending for him, no theatre party planned; nothing in fact. What can I do to bring him to me without humiliating myself further? I have done enough now, Heaven knows, but he surely has not suspected any motive."

It was December, a cold clear night. Helena sat moodily before the grate, trying to decide to give him up.

"I cannot endure the suspense he causes me!" she exclaimed. "I love him; my thoughts are constantly

with him, and what is the result? Nothing whatever but his coolest indifference. How thankful I am that he does not know my feelings for him. I have kept the secret safe in spite of the invitations extended to him as though more because of my friendship for his mother, than for himself. But oh! I am miserable. I wish I could forget him. Heaven knows I have thought of him long enough; and now, at last, to find he does not care for me! It is galling indeed! And why does he not care for me? In what way do I fail to please him? O Billy! Billy! I was so proud and happy less than two months ago, when you first came, to find you so handsome, so manly; and I was so sure you cared for me, and that long before this you would know who I really am. But now I fear that from me, you never will. No!" she exclaimed with vehemence. "He shall never know! Were he to find out that I am his child wife, he would suspect my feelings at once, and rightly construe my eager friendship; he would discover that I love him and would think that I desire to hold him to those childish vows. Ah! the very thought is unendurable. I shall go to Clydesville at once, and tell his mother all, and swear her to secrecy. But oh! I do wish I knew if he ever thinks of that moonlight night; or if he ever gives one thought to that poor little friendless girl?"

At that moment there was a knock on her door, and a servant handed her a card which brought a look of joy to her face. "So he has come at last, and of his own accord!" she exclaimed. "Come when I least expected him! Is he beginning to care for me a little after all?"

She took a rapid survey of herself in the glass, and

finding nothing to criticise, descended to the drawing-room.

"I was in the neighborhood, Miss Bryan," he said briskly, "and having this morning received some news which I thought would please you, I have dropped in."

"News?" she repeated wonderingly.

"Yes; I have a letter from Jack Culverton stating that his mother is very much better, and thinking that perhaps you had not heard from her recently, and that Jack had neglected to inform you of her improvement, I thought you might be glad to know."

"Yes, certainly; I am indeed glad to know she is recovering. And it is very kind of you to bring me the information," said Helena trying to appear at ease.

"Have you heard from Mrs. Culverton direct?" he asked.

"No; I have not," she replied, her manner becoming slightly constrained.

"Mrs. Culverton will no doubt write you soon, now that she is better," he said. "By the way," he added, "when I answer Jack's letter, I shall tell him of my acquaintance with you. I fancy he will be rather surprised; but I must not forget that indirectly, I owe the pleasure of our acquaintance to—to his family."

"Mr. Marvin, please do not even refer to me when you write him," said Helena, so imploringly, so earnestly, that he readily acquiesced. He asked no questions, made no comments, but he felt convinced that a misunderstanding of some kind existed for the present between handsome Jack Culverton and Helena Bryan of a nature which concerned themselves only.

Suddenly, like an inspiration, a way flashed to Helena's mind by which she might bring the conversation to a long desired issue.

"Your mother must miss Mrs. Culverton very much, and feel quite lonely while she is gone," she remarked, paving the way.

"She does indeed," he replied, "and feels quite isolated since the house has been closed."

"So I should think; it must be very unpleasant to have the nearest house on either side of her vacant. That reminds me, when I was in Clydesville, during my rambles I explored that vacant house on the opposite side of the street from the Culverton's. Finding it unlocked, and not seeing any sign of 'No trespassing allowed,' I walked in."

"Indeed?" was his brief response.

"It was such a pretty house too," she continued, "it seemed a pity for it to be inhabited only by rats and mice and hornets. I should think with very little expense it could be made into a very desirable summer cottage."

He merely assented without showing any particular interest in the matter.

"Who owns the place?" she asked, becoming more fearless as she proceeded.

"A lady—a very dear friend of my mother, did own it, but she died many years ago."

"Did she leave no heirs?"

"Yes; one."

"Where is *he?*"

"The heir was a girl."

"Well, would she not rent it, or sell it, do you think?"

"I really cannot say, Miss Bryan."

"Does she live in Clydesville?"

"No—and I have not the remotest idea where she lives."

Helena's heart was throbbing painfully; with difficulty she maintained an even tone. But having ventured, she determined to carry the matter to the end.

"What is the girl's name?" she persisted.

"Helena Channing."

"Indeed!" she exclaimed laughing. "Now I am interested for certain, since she has my name, and a rather uncommon one too, is it not?"

"It's a very pretty name," he answered quietly.

"Do you think so?" she asked. "I remember when I was a child of asking my mother why she named me 'Helena,' and she replied that I was named after an island in the Atlantic ocean. It struck me as being very funny, and I kept questioning her about it until she explained that before I was born she became deeply interested in reading the life of Napoleon, and more particularly that of Josephine, his divorced wife; and the impression it made on her caused me to be named 'Helena Josephine.' But why, with her sympathies all in favor of the latter, she should have called me by the former, or named me at all after the isle of Saint Helena, as though in remembrance of Napoleon's exile, I do not know. Now, about that house in Clydesville," she said, again returning to the subject. "Of course, Mr. Marvin, you do not think I am serious about it; but really, if my father were to rent the house and furnish it, we could go there for a few weeks every summer. It's a very delightful place,

and so near the Culvertons, you know—and your mother," she added as an afterthought.

"And near Jack Culverton, as well," though he; but the thought was not expressed.

"So you have no idea where the girl is who owns the place?" she again asked.

"No; she disappeared long ago, and has never since been heard of."

"How very strange!" said Helena. "And has she never communicated with any one concerning her house?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"How old a girl is she?"

"I suppose she is quite a young lady by this time, if living."

"You think possibly then she may be dead?—a very natural conclusion, certainly, after her long silence. But tell me, Mr. Marvin, did she lack good sense?—that is, was she anything of the Angevenia order?"

He was rather surprised at her persistence concerning the girl, but politely replied: "No; she was not in the least like Angevenia. I remember her as an exceedingly bright and interesting child. By the way, Miss Bryan, was not the escape of that girl from the burning building yesterday on Broadway a miraculous affair?" he asked, abruptly changing the subject.

"Yes; very miraculous indeed," she returned, her tone unconsciously betraying disappointment (not because of the girl's escape, however). "What can I do to make him talk of *her*?" she was thinking. "How non-committal he is; I don't know even yet, whether he feels one particle of interest in that child."

"I think the efforts of our firemen are not half

appreciated," he resumed. "People seem to take it as a matter of course when they risk their lives in those burning buildings to save other lives. But I consider them as great heroes as ever lived, and they ought to be more publicly honored."

Helena quite agreed with him. She had often admired, and spoken in praise of their wonderful, their heroic deeds; but there's a time and place for all things, and just now, firemen were *de trop*, and his indifference made her reckless as to consequences.

"Mr. Marvin," she said, determined to interest him if possible in the subject, "what do you suppose has become of—the girl who owns that house? Pardon my persistence, but to me, it seems a very singular thing that she should have disappeared, and never again be heard of. Did she meet with foul play?—is she dead?—or what? Why, if such a thing occurred here, the whole police force would be looking for her, and dozens of newspaper reporters as well."

"Perhaps not, if she had no friends to cause an investigation."

Helena held her breath. "And had she no friends?—no one at all interested in her fate?" she asked at length.

"None evidently who exerted themselves very much; at least not in a public way."

"But you said her mother was a very dear friend of your mother?"

"So she was; and my mother was greatly affected by the child's disappearance and so was I. We made all possible inquiries of a local nature, but could learn nothing."

Again he changed the subject, evidently not caring

to discuss it, and Helena reluctantly gave up the attempt to draw him out. For the moment, the desire again seized her to tell him who she was; but even as she began, the words died away on her lips, and remained unspoken.

Suddenly a prospective dilemma presented itself to her. He would be going to Clydesville one of these days, and there learn that she had never visited the Culvertons—that they had never heard of her; he would also find Mrs. Hopdyke in her house, and learn that Helena Channing *alias* Helena Bryan, had brought about the innovation. Then he would know all, in spite of her,—in spite of his mother.

"Well, I'll not borrow trouble in advance on that score," she thought. "'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.' Besides, it is just possible that although he has ceased to care for the child, he may in time care for me. If he does, I shall tell him the whole story, before he has an opportunity to learn it in Clydesville."

CHAPTER XXIV.

A FORTNIGHT later, Helena decided that the hope which had sprung up in her heart when Mr. Marvin so unexpectedly called, was but a vain hope after all.

"He must have called," she admitted bitterly, "merely to let me know the good news concerning my very particular friend Mrs. Culverton; a polite acknowledgment of his appreciation of my having notified him when I received that letter from his mother."

Helena was in the drawing-room awaiting the summons to dinner, over which she must soon preside and endeavor to appear as cheerful as usual; but at heart she felt miserable enough.

"Two weeks ago to-night he was here," she thought, "but there's no knowing when he will ever come again. How restless I feel—I long to get away; away from myself. If I remain home someone is sure to call, and I do not feel equal to the task of entertaining. I believe I'll go to the opera. This is Melba's last night, and I've only seen her once; surely that will prove a diversion."

Soon Mr. Bryan entered the room, and at her request readily consented to act as her escort. Hurrying through dinner, they barely had time to reach the opera house before the curtain rose for the first act. For a while she saw nothing but the stage; then her eyes wandered to a box on the other side of the house, and instantly became fixed in an earnest gaze. A shade passed over her face; for there before her, was Mr. Marvin in company with a young and beautiful woman. Helena remained until the last act, to all appearance perfectly calm, but in the solitude of her room she gave vent to her despair.

"Who is she? What is she to him? What right had he to be with her when he belongs to me?" she questioned with tears of grief and anger in her eyes. At last she sat down in a low chair by the grate to think it over. Presently, with a mew and a yawn, Dash, a big tiger cat, left his cushion and jumped up on her lap. "You never have occasion to worry yourself, do you Dash?" she said, stroking the cat's shiny

fur. Dash shook his head as though in answer, then settled down for a nap.

"What a fool I am!" she exclaimed. "Why can I not make up my mind to give him up?"

The cat raised his head in surprise at her sudden outburst.

"No, I don't mean you," she said. "I would not part with you, old Dash, under any circumstances; you're too fond of me, and I'm too fond of you." Dash settled down again, perfectly satisfied.

"I suppose," she muttered scornfully, "that just now I am in that state of mind which novel writers describe as 'jealous.' Well, if I am, it's not without good cause. Never before did I know what jealousy was. I've read of the ridiculous things which jealous women, and men too, have done, with a sort of contempt for them; but hereafter I shall be more charitable. A reasonably jealous person is deserving of sympathy, rather than contempt and censure."

A few days later Mr. Bryan went to Denver in some mining interest, and Helena felt almost relieved to have him go. "He would be sure to notice that I am unlike myself," she thought, "and would question me, and that I could not bear. Had my hopes and expectations turned out differently, he would have known all about them before now, for I would not have feared his disapproval. When I was a child he objected naturally; considering Billy an ignorant boy of no account, running about barefooted, dressed in coarse blue jean, with perhaps a crownless straw hat on his tow head. But he never could object to William Olney Marvin, I am sure, from any point of view, financial, social, or otherwise."

The day after Mr. Bryan's departure, Helena wrote to Mrs. Marvin imploring her to come and remain with her during his absence. "My father has gone to Denver," she wrote, "and will be gone two weeks. I am feeling wretchedly depressed, so please come at once; I really need your cheering company." In a postcript she added: "Please do not let your son know you are coming; you can notify him directly after your arrival."

"There," she thought when the letter was finished, "with her assistance I may perhaps get at the truth; and even that will be some satisfaction."

Mrs. Marvin responded in person, arriving the next day but one. Helena took her at once to her room, and after removing her bonnet and wraps they sat down for a confidential talk with no one to overhear them except Dash, the cat, and he was trustworthy.

"Now, Helena, dear," said Mrs. Marvin in a tone of earnest solicitude, "tell me what is troubling you. You are looking pale and worried; and I know there is more cause than the mere fact of Mr. Bryan having gone away for a week or two."

Helena made no reply. It had seemed easy enough to confide in Mrs. Marvin when she was far away, but all at once the task became an unenviable one.

"Have you yet told Billy who you are?" Mrs. Marvin asked suddenly.

"No I have not. I intended to long before this but —I——"

Mrs. Marvin sighed and for the moment was silent. "My dear child," she proceeded anxiously, "tell me if my son is—in any way ——" She paused; finding it difficult to express her meaning.

Helena looked up quickly. "Mrs. Marvin," she said, "you mean to ask if your son is in any way concerned in—that is, if he is the cause of my having summoned you here so hurriedly. I will be frank and admit that he is. I have many things to tell you as well, but somehow I shrink from doing so; I—hope I shall not forfeit your love and esteem."

Mrs. Marvin became really alarmed, and glanced uneasily towards the door as if to assure herself that no one were listening. "My child," she continued in a low tone, "I have secretly wondered and wondered why you have so long withheld your identity from your childhood playmate. And now—that you—Helena dear," she added pleadingly, "be frank with me—tell me all there is to tell; remember I am your true friend and—I am Billy's mother."

Mrs. Marvin's manner more than her words had caused a flush to dye the girl's cheek, and in sudden desperation she told her story, beginning with their pledged vows that night beside her mother's grave, her promise to return when twenty-one, and the sequel, up to date. "And," she added in an earnest voice, "from that hour to this, I have considered our vows sacred, and have been as true to him as though I were really his wife."

Mrs. Marvin impulsively clasped Helena within her arms. "My dear child," she said feelingly, "what you have told me only increases my affection and draws you nearer to me, and gladly would I welcome you as my daughter. As to my son's behavior and apparent indifference to you I can offer no explanation; it is to me indeed inexplicable." And she looked fondly, and with admiration on the girl's interesting face.

"Helena dear," she continued, "why do you not tell him who you are?—that might ——"

"His very indifference has prevented me," Helena interrupted. "If I thought he cared one iota for little Helena Channing I would tell him; or if he cared for me, I would tell him. But as it is, I cannot—he would think at once that I had designs on him."

Mrs. Marvin looked thoughtful, and for several minutes seriously meditated over the matter.

"Have you any idea who the lady was at the opera with him?" Helena asked.

"No; not the slightest."

"Has he ever mentioned anyone to you in whom he might be interested?"

"No, my dear; not so much as a word."

After dinner they returned to Helena's room, and speculated on the matter until bed time, then separated for the night, none the wiser or more settled in their conclusions than when they began.

Mrs. Marvin was well pleased and gratified with Helena's surroundings and evident social position. Pleased for the girl's sake, for whom she had ever felt a fond interest, and pleased for her son's sake, for she sincerely hoped to see him ere long claim her for his wife.

"So the Bryans," she mused, "were personal friends of Mrs. Channing. Poor woman! how she suffered and how cruelly she was treated by some of the Clydesville people—people far inferior to her and inferior to the Bryans.

Mrs. Marvin thought of her husband, and of how he had forbidden little Helena to share their home—her home, in fact. She was not a revengeful woman, but,

she was human, and many times during the last twelve years, despite her efforts to the contrary, bitter feelings had arisen for the moment toward him when thinking of his heartless decree in refusing to shelter the friendless child, and of his utter disregard of her own wishes to the matter.

"I wonder if Helena realized at the time, or if she remembers now his action toward her? I sincerely hope not," Mrs. Marvin thought, "for if she becomes our boy's wife, and does remember, the recollection would not be a pleasant one either for her or for him—particularly for him. How surprised he will be to find how much Mrs. Channing was esteemed by people like the Bryans, and to find that Helena is the child he once despised because of her parentage, and almost turned from the door. Well, no doubt his self-condemnation will be his punishment, and a justly deserved one too."

The next morning Mrs. Marvin wrote her son that she was at Mr. Bryan's, and requested him to call that same evening. He did so, and appeared greatly surprised to find her there. He expressed pleasure at seeing her, but she instinctively felt that he was not quite pleased, and would rather she had not come.

On taking leave she said to him: "I hope you will come up every evening while I am here, my son; it will be quite a treat to see you so frequently."

"How long do you intend to remain, mother?" he asked.

"Miss Bryan wishes me to remain until her father returns, which will be in about two weeks."

"Yes indeed," said Helena decisively. "I shall not permit your mother to leave me until after my father comes home."

A quick shade passed over his face, which Helena and his mother both noticed. The next evening when he called, Helena, on some pretext kept away, leaving him to his mother, as had been previously arranged. For a time they conversed on home matters, their interests in London, and his own business prospects. Then came a lull in the conversation.

"Mother," he said abruptly, "is not this friendship of yours for Miss Bryan rather sudden, and—well, to speak plain, is it not a little out of the usual order on so short acquaintance for you to have accepted a two-weeks' invitation from her?"

"Billy," she replied calling him by the old fond name, "I see that you are displeased because I came. I detected as much last evening and was not only surprised but grieved, and I am sure Miss Bryan observed your displeasure as well."

"O no, mother!" he replied quickly. "I am not displeased that you came; I am delighted to see you, and wish you were here as *my* guest. But this sudden intimacy with Miss Bryan, who is really a stranger, seems to me a little puzzling. I don't suppose she was ever in Clydesville but once in her life, and then as the guest of Mrs. Culverton; and, as I understand, you happened to meet her there. By the way, I wonder where she became acquainted with Mrs. Culverton? I never thought of it before; do you know, mother?"

"No; I do not. I never heard Mrs. Culverton refer to the subject, or Miss Bryan, either, for that matter. My son," she continued, after a moment's reflection, "there are people in this world whose acquaintance need not be measured by time, and Miss

Bryan is one of them. She is a charming girl, so bright, so kind-hearted, and so thoroughly interesting, that one cannot help but admire her at first sight, and the admiration is bound to develop speedily into sincere friendship—as has my own for instance."

He politely assented—nothing more.

"Billy, what have you against Miss Bryan?" she asked earnestly.

"Against her?" he returned in surprise. "Why nothing whatever I assure you; and like yourself, I consider her a very lovely and charming girl."

"You have a strange way of showing it, then," she returned dryly.

"What do you mean, mother?"

"I mean that if you consider her so 'lovely,' and so 'charming,' why have you not taken advantage of your opportunity to make her acquaintance? From my conversations with her concerning you I infer that you have been here but very seldom."

"I have come every time I was asked," he said quietly.

"Very well; but did she not give you a general invitation to call whenever you could find time?"

"Yes, I believe she did."

"You evidently have not done so. I cannot imagine what you are waiting for, unless for someone else to step in and win the prize,—for I assure you she *is* a prize."

"I fully agree with you; but mother," he added meekly, "as I had no intention of competing for the 'prize,' I did not wish to obtrude myself by taking undue advantage of her kind invitations."

Mrs. Marvin betrayed slight impatience because of his obtuseness. "Can you not see," she asked, "that

Miss Bryan likes you?—to be plain, that she is really fond of you, and that you have no rival? And, my boy," she continued more gently, "nothing would please me better than to know that you were seriously interested in her."

"Mother, why do you think Miss Bryan cares for me; she surely has not told you so?"

"Have I not eyes, and a woman's instincts?" she asked evasively. "And did I not see you together last evening? Why, my dear boy, her manner, her every look, told it to me as plainly as words could have done."

"Your observation is keener than mine then," he returned smiling, "for I have never detected anything of the kind. To me, her manner has always appeared merely frank and offhand."

"You are very obtuse Billy, stupidly so; but I intend to open your eyes. I am not, as you know, a scheming woman, but, my son, I am not entirely blind to your interests; and Miss Bryan, aside from her own charming personality, is a most desirable match for any man, even in far more affluent circumstances than you are."

"I admit that all you say is true, mother, and I dare say my friend, Jack Culverton, would also agree with you on that point."

"My son, what do you mean?"

"Simply that Jack Culverton is interested in Miss Bryan, and she in him. And being Jack's friend, I do not intend in his absence to play him false, by trying to rob him of his 'prize.'"

"So that is the solution of the mystery," thought Mrs. Marvin. "Well, well, what a misunderstanding

is existing between them." Aloud she said: "Billy, you are mistaken; that is all nonsense; there never existed between Jack and Helena the slightest—well I may say even friendship."

"I am sure you are wrong, mother," he returned quickly, "for Miss Bryan almost admitted as much to me the first time I saw her. I don't recall her exact words, but she impressed me with the fact that she and Jack were very much to each other, but later on I inferred from something she said that a misunderstanding had arisen, but as it did not concern me I asked no questions. But believe me, if any misunderstanding, serious or otherwise, exists between them either now or in future, it shall not be because of me."

"My dear boy," replied Mrs. Marvin convincingly, "you have my positive word that nothing whatever exists between them. I know very well of what I am speaking, and to convince you that I am right, I will state in strict confidence that Jack is engaged to Florence Chester. Florence told me so herself, and Mrs. Chester, even now, is preparing in a quiet way for her wedding in the spring. So if you have been holding yourself aloof from Helena Bryan because of Jack Culverton, it's fortunate I came down in time to disabuse your mind."

Mrs. Marvin felt greatly relieved, and rather gloried in her son's fine sense of honor, now that the obstacle was removed, and he free to make his feelings for Helena known. But her relief was of short duration.

"I regret to dampen your hopes, mother," he began reluctanctly, "but you might as well know first as last that Jack Culverton is not the sole cause of my indif-

ference to Miss Bryan. Of course, that alone would have prevented me from showing her any attention other than friendly; but there are other reasons just as prohibitive. But since learning the truth about Jack, I will admit to you that I could very easily become fond of Miss Bryan,—too fond of her; and that is why I've had the good sense to keep away. Were it not for ——"

"For what?" she impatiently interrupted. "You do not mean to tell me that you have some other attachment?"

"Yes, mother; I have."

Mrs. Marvin looked distressed, and leaned wearily back in her chair. "Will you not confide in me, and tell me all about it?" she asked presently.

"My dear mother," he said gently, "there's nothing to tell; that is, nothing definite as yet. But when there is, I shall certainly confide in you."

"Has—has the affair progressed so far that you are in honor bound to ——"

"Yes, mother; it has."

Mrs. Marvin sighed involuntarily, and again leaned back, with a hopeless expression on her face. If her son's honor were at stake, and some worthy girl's affection as well, she could say no more; and with a heavy heart she decided to outlive her disappointment, as in time Helena would outlive hers.

"I hope some day," he resumed, "to present her to you as my affianced wife; I am sure you will be pleased to know her."

"Yes, of course I shall wish to see her," was Mrs. Marvin's unresponsive remark.

He noticed her lack of interest, knew well her disap-

pointment, and felt somewhat cut up about it. As for Mrs. Marvin, she regretted having betrayed Helena's affection for him. She had done so impulsively, without suspecting his affections were otherwise placed. Helena, she knew, would feel terribly humiliated were she to suspect it. But then, he would think she had told it on her own authority, and with no voucher other than her own intuitions. Besides, she had implicit confidence in her son's honor and fine sensibilities in such matters; with him Helena's secret would be safe. Only a despicable cad will boast of a woman's affection for him, and particularly if he does not return it.

Observing that her son did not care to discuss the matter further, it was dropped, and after he had gone, she was compelled to face Helena with the truth of his indifference.

"Well," replied the girl calmly, "this, then, is the end. Anything is preferable to suspense; and now, I shall school myself to give him up."

"I cannot express my disappointment," said Mrs. Marvin in a grieved tone. "But as it cannot be helped, the sooner we become resigned the better for our own peace of mind. And remember, my dear, his indifference to you is not heartfelt, but from a sense of duty. Had he met you first, this unfortunate affair would have turned out differently. As it is, I think it is best for all concerned that in future you and he do not meet."

Then she turned away, too disappointed for Helena's sake and for her own to say more. "I have loved that girl from her very infancy," she thought with a pang of grief, "and now when my hopes were

high—when I was really happy in planning for the future of 'my children,' as I have already begun to call them, I suddenly find that my hopes were vain. Ah well! it's only another disappointment added to the many, for I can admit to myself that life has not been to me all that it might have been."

CHAPTER XXV.

Two days later Mrs. Marvin returned to Clydesville; nothing could be gained by remaining, and in her present state of mind she preferred home to any other place. Helena felt bitterly indignant toward young Marvin as the cause of her going.

"I think it very selfish and cruel of him," she said to Mrs. Marvin at parting. "If he does not want my friendship he need not have it; but he has no right to deprive me of yours. Why he should object to you being here I cannot imagine."

"My dear, perhaps you are mistaken and are judging him wrongfully."

"No, Mrs. Marvin, I am not. He plainly showed his displeasure when he found you were here, and I am equally certain that he is the cause of your hastening away. Nothing can alter my opinion on that point, and I don't feel now as though I could forgive him very soon either. Now tell me frankly, Mrs. Marvin," she continued in a coaxing tone, "is it not owing to his influence that you are leaving me sooner than you otherwise would have done?"

Mrs. Marvin made an evasive reply. Helena did not press the matter nor insist on a direct answer, for she was fully convinced that her surmises were correct, and she observed that the subject was an unpleasant one for her guest to discuss.

After Mrs. Marvin's departure the time dragged heavily enough. Hope will keep the spirits from sinking, but with Helena all hope seemed dead and for the time being, was. On the third day, after seriously thinking the matter over, she sat down at her desk, pale and determined.

"I will see him once more," she thought, "and tell him all. He would soon hear it in Clydesville, that is inevitable; and the explanation for my apparent deception and fraud would be better from me than from any one else. But he shall never know that I love him. I merely want him to know that my childish promise was kept about returning; besides, it will be a sort of satisfaction to see him when he learns who I am. And, more than all, I want to let him know that I resent his action concerning his mother; and then it will be a relief to have the suspense at an end."

Acting on impulse, she wrote a note requesting him to call that evening. "There," she exclaimed when it was finished, "this is the very last word he shall ever receive from me."

Promptly at eight o'clock he came. Her greeting was as cordial as ever, but he detected that her manner was forced, and that a determined expression shone in her eyes. His own manner, despite all effort to the contrary, became constrained; his mother's words concerning Helena's affection for him would

come to his mind, and they produced sensations which were somewhat conflicting.

They spoke of the stormy weather, of Mrs. Marvin's recent visit, then the conversation lagged.

"By the way," she remarked carelessly, "my father and I attended the opera one evening a week or so ago and I saw you there, Mr. Marvin; we had the box directly opposite yours."

"Yes," he returned easily, "I was in Mrs. Armstrong's box; she is the bride of one of our firm. Mr. Armstrong secured tickets in advance, but was unexpectedly called out of town, and as it was Melba's last night, and Mrs. Armstrong was eager to hear her, he requested me to be his wife's escort."

So this, then, was not the girl he was to wed after all! "Well," thought Helena, "it matters little to me now who she is, and so why should I feel at all interested or care?"

Again the conversation lagged, and their artificial efforts to keep it alive were plainly evident, each realizing that the other felt ill at ease.

"It was very good of you to brave the storm tonight, in response to my note," she said at last, more for the sake of saying something than otherwise, it seemed to him.

"And it was very good of you to invite my mother here for a visit," he returned. "It was quite a treat for her, and I am sure she thoroughly appreciated it and enjoyed herself very much."

Helena looked at him sceptically. His words seemed to her but a mockery; false in themselves and uttered in mere pretense. Nevertheless he had given her the opportunity she desired. An indignant light

came to her eyes, and a scornful tremor to her voice, as she replied:

"If your mother was enjoying herself, why did you begrudge her the pleasure, and influence her to go home so much sooner than she intended?"

He looked at her inquiringly.

"You cannot deny it," she proceeded with increasing emphasis. "I saw from the very first that you disapproved; in fact, that you were really displeased because she came."

He withdrew his eyes, but made no reply—neither to deny or affirm. His very silence only increased her indignation the more.

"Your mother and I are very good friends, Mr. Marvin," she said resentfully, "and I extended to you, as her son, the hospitality of this house, hoping to make it pleasant for you to be informally welcome at all times; you, however, have almost repudiated the hospitality offered you, and my friendship as well. That, of course, was entirely optional with yourself; but when it comes to interfering with the friendship existing between your mother and me, that is quite another matter, and one which I would like you to explain."

"Miss Bryan," he answered in a quiet tone of remonstrance, "you do me great injustice in thinking that in any way I wished to either decline your hospitality, or repudiate your friendship; or that I was displeased because my mother was here."

"Were you pleased?" she asked in a satirical tone. "Were you glad she came? Did you persuade her to remain, or did you discourage her, and influence her to go?"

For a moment he was silent. "I see that you doubt me," he said at length.

"Have I not good reason?—can you deny the charge?"

"Yes, and no. Miss Bryan," he resumed more confidentially, "you are seriously offended with me, and the only way I can hope to obtain your forgiveness is to confide in you, and in that manner qualify my contradictory statement, and make my position clear."

"Very well," she returned coldly, "I will listen to your confidence, and then I have something to confide to you, which I think will surprise you very much."

Her manner chilled rather than inspired him; but endeavoring to ignore her displeasure, and appear perfectly at ease, he proceeded amicably:

"Miss Bryan, do you remember some few weeks ago of questioning me about that vacant house in Clydesville?—the one you spoke of renting?"

She was surprised—startled; but calmly replied! "Yes, I remember it quite well."

"And do you remember how interested you were in the girl who owns it?"

"Yes—I remember," she replied, struggling bravely to maintain her composure. She indeed remembered how she had tried on that occassion to induce him to talk on the subject, and how he had evaded it until she was compelled to give up the attempt. And now, for him to refer to it voluntarily, and under such circumstances, was simply amazing.

"It is of her," he continued, "I wish to speak."

Helena leaned eagerly forward. "You told me," she said, speaking rapidly, "that the girl disappeared

years ago, and had never been heard of. Have—have you heard anything of her since?"

"No, not yet; but I'm expecting to very soon."

Every vestige of color left her face; she stared at him confusedly, and in a strangely altered voice asked:

"Why are you expecting to hear from her? What is your reason?"

"My reason is because of my faith in her. But if you care to listen, I will tell you of a little romance in my life which concerns her as well."

"I do most assuredly," returned Helena. "I was greatly interested in all you told me, but—you impressed me with the idea that you were absolutely indifferent as to whether she were living or dead."

"I impressed you wrongly. Probably because at that time I did not wish to discuss the subject, or confide in anyone. But you have forced me to do so in order to vindicate myself; and strange as it may seem to you, she is concerned in my vindication. I believe I told you her name was Helena?"

"Yes; you told me that."

"But I did not tell you how fond I was of the child, nor how fond she was of me; as children, we were all in all to each other, playmates and little lovers from my earliest recollection."

Helena turned away her face; she could not look him calmly in the eye and appear unmoved while in such eager suspense as to what his confidence would portend.

"Pardon me," she said, "but—the girl's name, her strange disappearance, and—all together, affected me very much, and does still; but pray proceed, I am listening."

"After her mother died," he continued, "it was arranged that she should live with a family some distance from us, and the thought of going nearly broke her heart, and my own as well. The evening before she went she stole secretly to the churchyard, to bid her mother's grave farewell. I followed and witnessed her passionate grief.

"At that time I was only twelve years old, but considering myself quite a man, I endeavored to soothe her with assurances of my love; and, before returning to the house we exchanged vows of everlasting faithfulness to each other, calling on Heaven to witness our sincerity.

"The woman with whom she went to live was unkind, and Helena, being possessed of wonderful spirit, self reliance and courage, rebelled and ran away. She came directly to my mother, arriving after I was in bed and asleep. But, unknown to anyone, she came to my room to bid me good bye. I know this from the fact that in the morning I found a little note from her, evidently written then and there, and which I have always kept. Even now it is in my memorandum book."

Producing the note, written in lead pencil on a scrap of brown wrapping paper, he read:

"DEAR BILLY:—I am going away, I don't know where to yet, but sometime when I can I will come back to you as I promised I would that night when we got married. So dont forget me Billy, for I wont forget you, and if I get so far away that I cant come for a long time I will for sure when I get to be 21 years old. So good bye dear Billy. I just kissed you twice

but you didnt wake up. I feel awful bad to leave you Billy, but be sure and remember that I will come back.

Your little wife,

HELENA."

"From that hour to this, Miss Bryan," he resumed, "she has never been seen or heard of; and no one knows the anxiety I have suffered because of her. From the hour we stood together beside her mother's grave I have considered her my child wife. She has been so continually in my thoughts as to have become a part of my very self, and I have been as true to her as though she were legally my wife."

Helena sat immovable, her face averted, her eyes riveted to the floor. So perfect was her self-control that not a sign was visible of the gladness in her heart.

"I have not thought of him and loved him in vain then, all these years," she mused. "While I have been thinking of him, he has been thinking of me, and I, in my ignorance of the truth since meeting him again, have been miserable because of it. What a revelation!"

"Where do you suppose she is, Mr. Marvin?" Helena finally asked.

"Heaven only knows; but I feel that she is living and well, and that before long I shall see her again."

"Why do you think so?"

"Because of her promise. She was not a shallow, frivolous child; she was earnest and womanly even then; and I am confident she will come back to me."

"Has the time arrived when she was to come?"

"That I cannot positively answer," he replied, as I

do not know just when her birthday occurs, not even the month. But I do know that it is sometime during the present year, which will soon expire. She was nine then, and that was twelve years ago ; so if she is not yet twenty-one, she soon will be."

"Does she know where to find you ?" Helena asked quietly.

"No, but she knows where to find my mother, and mother has always promised to notify me in case she came. And now, Miss Bryan, I will disclose my reason for confiding all this to you. When my mother visited you I was not as displeased as you thought, but I must admit that I was somewhat anxious while she remained. I knew the time had come, or would soon, when little Helena had promised to return, and I wanted her to find a welcome, even if she did not find me ; and I am sure, since hearing my explanation, that your sympathies are still further aroused in her, and sufficiently, I hope, that my course may receive your approval, rather than your censure."

"Have you told your mother anything of this, Mr. Marvin ?"

"To that I must again answer yes and no. I did mention to her during one of our conversations that I was interested in a lady whom I hoped some day would be my wife ; but I told her nothing definite."

"Do you think she will be pleased when she knows all about it ?" Helena asked searchingly.

"I hope she will ; she was very fond of the child, and of the child's mother."

But even as he spoke, a serious doubt arose in his mind as to his mother being pleased. He had kept the secret safe, thinking that when the time came, and

Helena returned, she would welcome her as a daughter. But now, her heart was set on Miss Bryan, with her wealth and social position, and poor little Helena Channing's prospect of meeting his mother's heart-felt approval did not seem as assured as it once had.

"Suppose," continued Miss Bryan, "that even if she is living and does remember her promise and returns, that you are disappointed in her? Twelve years is a long time. She may have woefully changed and prove to be an ignorant awkward girl, whom you would be ashamed to acknowledge even as an acquaintance. What then would you consider your duty, Mr. Marvin?"

"I cannot believe such a thing possible," he replied. "She was refined by nature, and too intellectual, too observing, to be other than what I have always imagined her to be."

"But your imagination may be astray; such a thing is very probable. We are all to a degree creatures of circumstance, and hers may have been extremely unfortunate. In that case what would you really do?"

He became thoughtful. "Suppose she's right?" he thought. "What would I do? I certainly could not permit an uncultured, or vulgar girl to take the place of my ideal; that would be impossible, unjust to myself, and—to her. But it's more than probable that if we ever meet we shall both be disappointed in each other, and hopelessly disillusioned; and, since knowing Miss Bryan, I almost hope it will be so. For although I am loath to give up my childish romance as a dream, Helena Channing must be more charming than Helena Bryan, or I shall regret ——"

"It is quite a pretty romance," said Helena, inter-

rupting his thoughts, "and your long-enduring faith is amazing and deserves a happy reward. I hope, yes," she repeated earnestly, "I sincerely hope for your sake, that the child has developed into a charming girl, and that you may discover her soon and not be disappointed to find that your devotion to her has been misplaced."

Did he detect an insincerity in Helena's words? Remembering his mother's confidence concerning her love for him, he fancied he did. A vivid imagination too often, perhaps, causes us to do injustice to others.

"But remember, Mr. Marvin," she added consolingly, "if you find your fondest hopes all vain, do not be disheartened and feel that you have lost all—that nothing remains; the world is wide, you know, and there are thousands of others just as lovely as you have imagined your 'Ideala' to be."

He looked up quickly, and in evident surprise at her rather suggestive remark. She was somewhat surprised herself in having made it, and would not have done so, had she not known that soon her words would be rightly interpreted. Besides, she realized now that in his heart he loved her, although he would scarcely admit the fact to himself, so loyal was he endeavoring to be to Helena Channing. And the knowledge of this fact only increased her admiration for him. She smiled to herself in picturing his astonishment when he knew who she really was; and his joy as well she now dared to hope. "And his mother," she thought. "How delighted she will be. To-morrow I shall write and tell her all about it."

"How long will you wait, Mr. Marvin," she continued, "providing your little Helena fails to come?"

"If she does not come within the present year, and I do not hear from her," he replied resignedly, "I shall give her up as dead—dead to me at least."

"Would you be greatly disappointed?"

"I would, certainly; her memory has been with me so long, so tenderly, that it would seem a cruel ending to my romance if ——" He paused, but added quickly: "She may come yet; my faith in her is not yet dead."

"Is it not strange that she has never written you, or let you hear from her in any way? How do you account for her silence?" Helena asked curiously.

"That is a problem, and a rather mysterious one," he replied. "My mother has thought for a long time that she is dead, but I cannot think so. I feel strongly impressed that when she becomes of age she will keep her word, and satisfactorily explain her long silence."

"Well, I do not wish to appear pessimistic, Mr. Marvin," said Helena, "or cause you to be so, but really, your faith seems to be very visionary. To my mind the most probable thing would be that she is married to someone else, and you, long since forgotten."

"In that case," he answered with a vague smile, "I shall be only too glad to hear of her happiness."

"Well, suppose you do hear from her," Helena persisted, "and she tells you she is very unhappily married. What then would you do?"

"That I cannot say, But why do you ask, Miss Bryan?"

"O for no particular reason," she replied evasively. "But would you still remain attached to your childish love?"

She laughed as she asked that question—a nervous,

hysterical laugh; her cheeks were aglow with suppressed excitement, and her manner strangely affected him. For a moment he was silent, then impulsively answered: "No, Miss Bryan, I would not. I would remember your advice about not being 'disheartened' and turn to you for consolation."

She dropped her eyes, but did not protest, and the encouraging smile which she endeavored vainly to suppress, emboldened him to proceed.

"Helena," he said, dwelling almost tenderly on the word, "I have never called you by that name before; but it is her name, and in many other respects you remind me of her. Your eyes are as I remember hers to have been, and you are like what I imagine her to be now; she is constantly in my mind when I am with you, and ——" He abruptly paused, as though aware that he was committing himself, while the color deepened in his face. A moment later he added:

"And that must be my excuse for speaking to you as unreservedly as I have done."

His excuse, now, was flimsy enough; no longer could he conceal from her his real feelings. The time had come to undeceive him, and to tell him who she was; and not in the spirit she had thought to tell him a few hours before, but as she had hoped when they first met. She quietly rose, and stepping to a small table close by, took a little gold ring from under a book where it had been concealed, and handing it to him, said:

"Mr. Marvin, did you ever see this before?"

He examined it closely, read the inscription on the inside, then sprang to his feet.

"Yes," he exclaimed; "this is the ring I gave to Helena Channing. How came you to have it?"

"She is not dead, nor married, nor has she forgotten you," replied Helena with wonderful calmness. "She kept her promise, and went to you on the very day named, but you were not there."

For an instant he gazed at her blankly as though her meaning was not quite clear, then, as if an inspired thought came to him, he laid his hand on her arm, his eyes intense in their expression of eager inquiry. Helena, unable to resist their pleading, joyously cried:

"O Billy, do you not know me—your little Helena?"

His face grew radiant. Yes, he knew her; knew that his fondest hopes were more than realized; knew that the little sweetheart of his boyhood was now the idol of his thoughts. He did not wait for an explanation. His suppressed love for Helena Bryan burst through his self-control when he learned that she was Helena Channing, his first and only love; that he had found her, and that she loved him, and had ever worn his image in her heart. Such a wealth of fortune dawned upon him in the realization that this beautiful girl was all his own as he looked into her smiling eyes so full of love and joy, that for a moment he stood like one dazed with the rapture of a beautiful vision, trembling lest it be all a dream. Then, with an exclamation of delight that found a happy response, he impulsively drew her within his arms, and the vows of their childhood were lovingly renewed.

EPILOGUE.

MR. and MRS. WILLIAM OLNEY MARVIN are to-day prominent members of metropolitan society. Their entertaining, while not showily lavish, is in excellent taste, and is thoroughly enjoyed by those who are fortunate enough to be included among their friends.

Young Mrs. Marvin is very popular, and her name often appears in the society columns of the leading journals as being a "well-gowned" woman. Being well-gowned, however, and reading descriptions of her charming toilettes, is not her highest ambition. But, being a society woman, she has a fad, and it is to be regretted that her fad is a rare one among her set. Frequently on pleasant afternoons she may be seen driving in Central Park in a well-appointed turn-out behind a handsome pair of thoroughbreds, whose magnificent tails are tangible proof of her convictions that the cruel practice of "docking" should be discontinued, both from an artistic standpoint and a humane one as well.

Mr. Bryan, on becoming acquainted with Mr. Marvin, withdrew his former objections to him as groundless, and has treated the young couple handsomely indeed.

Mr. Marvin, senior, is justly proud of his daughter-in-law, and is secretly annoyed and conscience-stricken because of her indifference to him, while she evinces such fondness for his wife. Still he has no actual cause for complaint, for her manner toward him while formal, is always studiously polite—too polite, in fact;

he would be far better pleased were she less conventional with him and more friendly. But he is justly punished, and must be content, for her filial affection he can never possess.

But young Mrs. Marvin is a very happy woman; she is devoted to her husband—he is equally devoted to her. She is surrounded with wealth, luxury and friends, and has not the remotest suspicion that a family "skeleton" exists in her closet. But there does, nevertheless. And, as a person's eligibility is more a question of pedigree than otherwise within her set, it is to be hoped, for her sake, that Mr. Bryan's determination of long ago to keep the "skeleton in the closet" securely locked in, may forever be maintained; that it may never step forth, nor the sensational secrets concerning her mother, which would set her world to thinking, ever be disclosed.

THE END.

SOME COMMENTS OF THE PRESS ON "A TITLE—REJECTED."

In "A Title—Rejected" Octavia Clouston has made her entrance into the domain of literature in a manner to at once make herself felt. The book must certainly make an impression, and it could be made to serve a noble mission if it were placed in the hands of every young woman in the land whose father is wealthy enough to buy her that matrimonial "bow-wow"—a titled husband. . . . In the entire 336 pages there is not a dull line, an unhappy phrase, or a slip-shod sentence, which is saying all that needs be from a literary point of view. From a moral point of view the story is most wholesome; the sentiment is sound, pure and elevated, while all through the book are little bits of philosophy and deep peeps away down into human nature that come on the reader with most pleasantly startling surprise. That large and sensible class of people who read novels only for what there is in them worth reading, and not because they are Trilbied into a flatulent and ephemeral notoriety, will find a treasure in "A Title—Rejected."—*New York Sunday Mercury.*

Young women who read Mrs. Octavia Clouston's new novel, "A Title—Rejected," will receive a sound warning as to the risks run in marrying titled foreigners. Though all foreign counts are fortunately not of the stamp depicted in this novel, yet it is not difficult to believe that just such a story as is here told could have been paralleled in real life.—*Boston Courier.*

"A Title—Rejected" is a novel containing enough plot and intrigue to satisfy the most exacting reader of fiction. The villain of the story is an Italian count living in Paris. His first victims are a beautiful opera singer and her sister, but he meets his match when he attempts to victimize an American girl whom he abducts and confines in an old castle on the Seine. . . . The author has shown great ingenuity and vivid imagination in her description of the castle scenes, while the experiences of her heroine are indeed thrilling. The average novel reader will follow it to the end with unabated interest.—*Bookseller, Newsdealer and Stationer.*

A very effective story, from the point of pertinently involved and mystery-holding facts, which draw naturally their consistent climaxes, is " A Title—Rejected." While the events of the story are varied and stirring enough to interest any story-lover, they will further accent to many minds the complications produced by the foreign nobility mania which has so much disintegrated the ranks of American society. . . . The plot is a good one and well carried out. It is also significant for the nature of the events chronicled—many of which any reader will realize as easy of occurrence. The story is so admirably narrated that no one will care to put it down until the whole web of the heroine's life is straightened out. It possesses admirably managed elements of an exciting story, while not at all partaking of the nature of sensationalism. The author has shown a great deal of skill in the development of situation and the outlining of character, and the story will be much enjoyed.—*Boston Ideas.*

" A Title—Rejected " is a romance recording the terrible disasters that befell an American girl who fell into the power of an Italian count. . . . The story is for the benefit of young ladies who in their social aspirations seek alliance with European aristocracy. The reader is led on from page to page with great interest.—*Indianapolis Sentinel.*

" A Title—Rejected " is a powerfully written novel. . . . It is intended for a warning to the young ladies of America against any alliance with titled foreigners.—*Baltimore American.*

" A Title—Rejected " is decidedly one of the books of the day—that is to say, it seems to have been written both for a purpose and to entertain. In the preface the author says the book was written for " those young ladies whose social aspirations have no limit," yet there is not anything in it that would make an American heiress change her mind to-morrow if she had read it—because the story, while it is interesting, is always improbable. European noblemen of to-day do not shut lovely young women up in chateaux to secure their hands in marriage —they don't have to. The story is well written ; Octavia Clouston shows splendid imagination and real cleverness in handling matters and dramatic situations.—*Buffalo Sunday News.*

. . . The book is, we presume, intended to show to the average American girl the pitfalls prepared for them by titled foreigners. The story is well written, and is, by far, above the average book of the day.—*Englewood Times.*

Considered as an example of current fiction, "A Title—Rejected" has the merit of sustained interest in narrative, which is more than can be said of many novels. It is the story of an American girl who refuses to marry a wicked count, and the manner in which the details of his intrigues are carried out shows him to have been a villain of discernment in female attractions and gifted in satanic devices. . . . The author is to be especially commended for the manner in which she portrays her female characters—all types of clean and pure womanhood. The book is meeting with much favor and is highly praised for its smooth movement and dramatic effect.—*Hackensack Republican.*

"A Title—Rejected" is a romance written after the French model once in vogue. The villainous Count d'Alfrai, who is an abductor and intriguer of the first rank, though always polished and courtly in his dealings, is finally the victim of his own scheming. Beautiful women and strong, impetuous lovers and husbands abound, and virtue is, of course, triumphant.—*Philadelphia Evening Bulletin.*

. . . In a newspaper review it would be folly to attempt to even give an idea of the plot, or the base machinations of the villain who figures in it, or of the dastardly methods which he adopts to gratify his morbid propensities. We can only say that Octavia Clouston's work gives strong evidence of careful and intelligent preparation ; that the plot is ingeniously developed, and that the story is so well written that it sustains its interest from beginning to end. To be appreciated "A Title—Rejected" must be read, and we cheerfully recommend it to those of our American heiresses whose eyes are dazzled by the glitter of foreign coronets, and before they embark upon matrimonial ventures with foreign noblemen.—*Steam and Sail.*

"A Title—Rejected" is a story full of action and will interest the popular mind. The plot is somewhat complicated, but is made plausible by the ingenuity of the author, and the end is not disappointing.—*Boston Times.*

"A Title—Rejected" is a novel pertinent to American thought of the day. It depicts most graphically the story of an American girl who rejects a titled count, though the refusal costs her almost life and liberty. . . . For intricacy of plot it has few rivals, it is one of the cleverest of its kind, and a thrilling interest is sustained from beginning to end. There is a power of fascination in this work in the world of fiction. Mrs. Clouston's other stories vary widely in character, and her "Charity Ferguson Letters," which appeared in the *New York Recorder*, were unique.—*Washington Heights Gazette.*

Mrs. Clouston has apparently written "A Title—Rejected" as a warning to American girls who are ambitious to marry foreign noblemen. The experience of her heroine was certainly startling, and should serve as a deterrent to "those of our young ladies whose social aspirations have no limit," The book is interesting enough.—*Charleston News and Courier.*

. . . The book deals with the altogether too prevalent desire on the part of our wealthy families to make marriage alliances with the foreign nobility, and it is deeply interesting throughout.—*Bergen County Democrat.*

. . . The keynote of this story is "She did *not* stoop to conquer." It is very readable,—*Western Stationer.*

To show the American weakness for titles is the object of a reminiscent narrative, full of the mysterious paraphernalia of Jane Porter, which has been written by Octavia Clouston—"A Title—Rejected." . . . The story is after the peculiar style of "Monk" Lewis, and is very interesting.—*New York Evening World.*

"A Title—Rejected" is a shaft aimed at the weakness of American women for titles. The story is told as a reminiscent narrative, and is full of mysterious coincidences, striking likenesses, secret doors, anæsthetic potions, mistaken identities, etc. —*Publisher's Weekly.*

"A Title—Rejected" would do good if it were to fall into the hands of those American heiresses who buy foreign counts for husbands; and to any young lady contemplating such a course I commend the book and the further counsel: "Don't." —*New York Recorder.*

"A Title—Rejected" is a spirited romance, detailing the experiences of a beautiful and accomplished American girl, who, on a visit to a friend in France, was thrown by force of circumstances into the association of an unprincipled Italian count, from whose unwelcome attentions, after a series of exciting adventures, she finally escapes . . . . The story is well maintained throughout and is sufficiently romantic and tragic to satisfy the most exacting reader.—*Detroit News-Tribune.*

DODWORTH UPRIGHT PIANOS.

STYLE 1.—7⅓ octave, ivory keys, overstrung scale, three stringed, socket action, fret and engraved panels, full iron frame, three pedals, swing desk, continuous hinges on top and fall. This style in EBONIZED, MAHOGANY, or WALNUT veneered case.

Height, 4 feet 6 inches. Width, 5 feet 2 inches.
Depth, 2 feet 3½ inches.

Prices: Ebony, $167.50. Mahogany or Walnut, $175.00.

Including Fancy Hardwood Stool to match.

WE INVITE Professional Musicians, Teachers, and Pianists to thoroughly examine the NEW DODWORTH UPRIGHT PIANOS, that we sell for $167.50, $175.00, $185.00, and $195.00, (according to style), knowing they must acknowledge and confess they are

WORTH DOUBLE THE PRICE,
THE BEST VALUE IN THE MARKET,
and EQUAL TO THE BEST PIANO MADE.

For a Complete Catalogue and further information, address

DODWORTH & CO.,

108 & 110 East 125th St, New York.

The Dodworth Entertainment Bureau and Musical Agency.

Headquarters for the Leading Star Entertainers for Church, Lodge, Club, and all Entertainments.

DODWORTH'S CELEBRATED BAND AND ORCHESTRA.

MUSICIANS FURNISHED FOR ALL OCCASIONS.

P. S.—We make a specialty of **out of town** engagements.

For further particulars address

V. S. DODWORTH, Manager,

108-110 East 125th Street, New York.

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper pro
Neutralizing Agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date:
AUG 199
BOOKKEEPE
PRESERVATION TECHNOLOGIES,
111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Twp., PA 16066
(412) 779-2111
US

THE NEEDHAM BINDERY, INC.
BOUND TO PLEASE
JUNE 69
N. MANCHESTER,
INDIANA

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

00022220846